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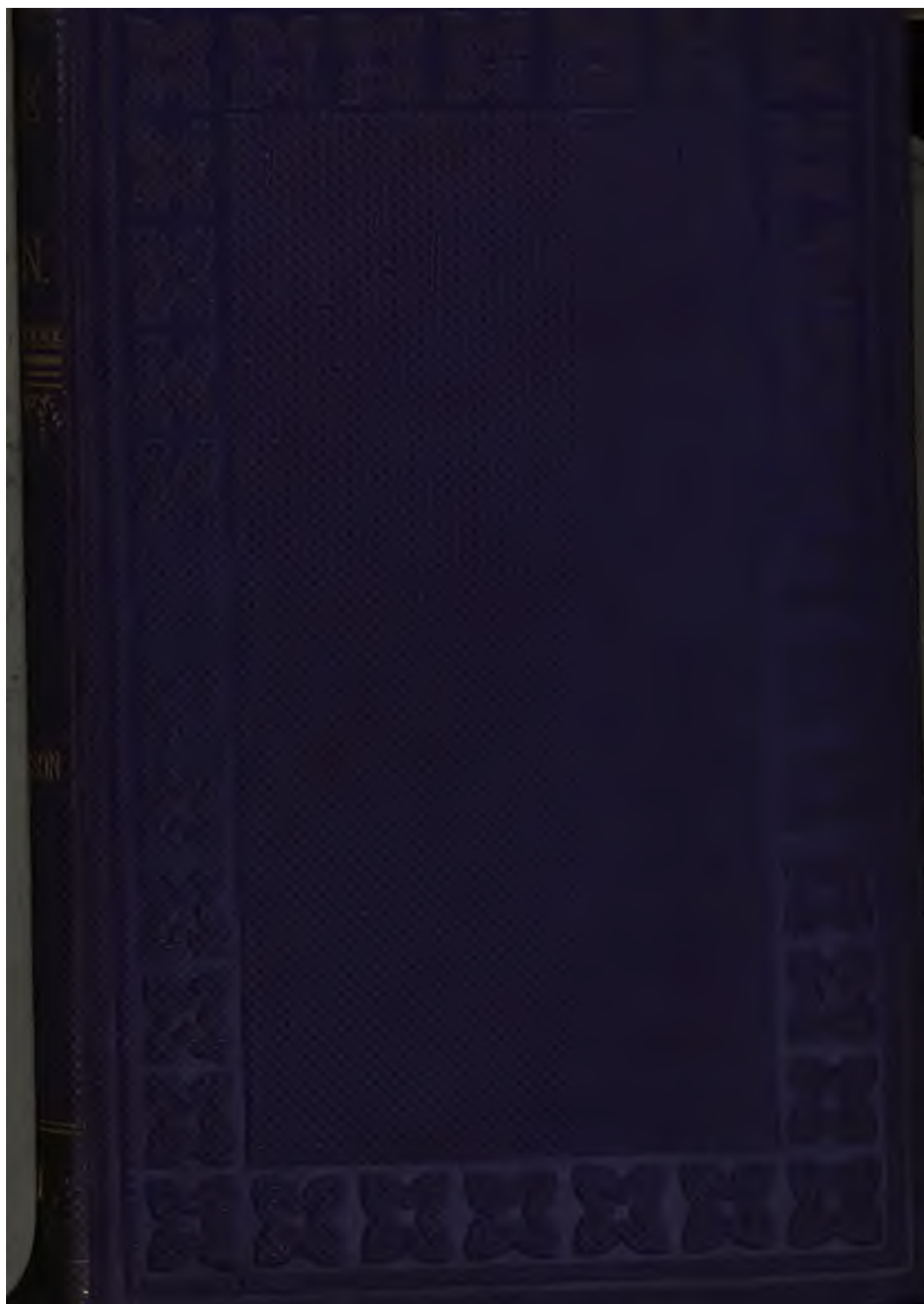
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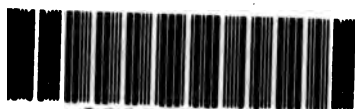
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L I V E I T D O W N .

VOL. II.



L I V E I T D O W N .

A Story of the Fight Hands.

BY

J. C. JEAFFRESON,

AUTHOR OF

“OLIVE BLAKE’S GOOD WORK,”

“A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS,”

ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HOW EDGAR TURRETT SAID IT, AND WHAT FOLLOWED THEREUPON . . .	1
II. THE RECTOR DOESN'T DANCE . . .	16
III. A FIRE EXTINGUISHER. . . .	43
IV. CHRISTINA AND CARRY . . .	62
V. MISS CHRISTINA CREATES ANOTHER SENSATION	75

CHAPTER	PAGE
VI. HOW MR. EDGAR TURRET WAS GENEROUS RATHER THAN PRUDENT IN HIS RE- SOLVES	90
VII. A STRANGE VISITOR	106
VIII. AN IMPORTANT INTERVIEW	121
IX. AT HOME AND ON THE TRAMP	143
X. A NEW THOUGHT FOR CARRY	159
XI. FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH :—FAITHFUL AFTER DEATH	170
XII. OLD FRIENDS	181
XIII. JOHN BRADDOCK'S CANDID OPINION OF HIS SON-IN-LAW	196
XIV. ALEC BARBER'S 'LITTLE PLACE'	207
XV. MR. ALEXANDER BARBER STUDIES "CROWN LAW"	223
XVI. NEW ASPECTS OF ALEC BARBER	240
XVII. ANOTHER YEAR	265
XVIII. CONVERSION	282
XIX. CASTLE HOLLOW AND ELSEWHERE IN 1821	304

LIVE IT DOWN.

CHAPTER I.

HOW EDGAR TURRETT SAID IT, AND WHAT FOLLOWED
THEREUPON.

THE reader has doubtless inferred that, when Edgar Turrett returned to Castle Hollow and Merton-Piggott, he found it no difficult task to induce Carry to lay her hand in his, and give utterance to that small word "yes" which Probity Bromhead had told her would bring scarcely less joy to him than to her lover.

Indeed, the young man had won what he sought, almost before he asked for it.

He came back from his visit to London (where he could scarce enjoy the amusements of the theatres, so egotistically occupied was he with his own personal romance of real life), and from Leicestershire (where the strong excitement of hunting in a previously untried country merely acted as a temporary sedative to a heart that was burning to be elsewhere), and from King's Heath (where the winning of great stakes had only suggested to his mind the far greater prize for

which he had entered himself), and from Cambridge (where University life seemed to have lost all the colour, and warmth, and brightness of former years). It is needless to say that absence did not make his love grow cold. There was no necessity for him to tell his grandfather, what Aunt Adelaide had already communicated to the veteran, and what the veteran had assured himself would be the result of 'waiting,'—to a scion of the house of Turrett. The two had few words on the subject. At the close of the evening of Edgar's re-appearance at Castle Hollow, the Squire, on giving him a blessing for the night, grasped his hand tightly, and said, "And now, boy, be off to Merton-Piggott, and do your best with Miss Caroline. Your aunt has seen her, and says she is a charming young lady. From my inmost heart, lad, I hope the young lady will have as high an opinion of you. And mind, if you are ever so fortunate as to bring her home to this house during my life-time, there wont be one tinge of reserve in the cordial greeting I shall give her. My satisfaction will be complete."

So Edgar Turrett went over to Merton-Piggott, "prepared to do his best;"—but he never did it, for the simple reason that no ground was left him on which to do it. He took into the field a loyal heart, full of chivalric devotion to an innocent and lovely girl; he carried with him a resolution to win her for his own, in spite of all obstacles; but before he could show his strength and marshal his forces, or even herald his approach, the victory had been accomplished by others. It was like intending to drive a tin tack with Nasmyth's steam hammer, or making preparations to capture a hen-coop with siege trains and heaviest artillery, was that advance upon "the child" of Gray Street. The

pear was ripe, hanging on the topmost branch of a lofty tree ; and as the young man looked at it with longing, thirsting eyes, and was meditating how he could best climb up and pluck it,—it fell down of its own accord into his open hand. Possibly, had he known all the pains which had been expended to bring that luscious fruit to maturity for him, he would ungratefully have wished that less had been done by beneficent friends,—and that more had been left for his own achievement. But fortunately he was not aware of the busy deeds of his coadjutors, known and unknown ;—how a ‘lorn, lone woman’ recently dead in ‘her eighty-three’ had helped him ; how John Bromhead had helped him ; how the Bishop of Beverley had helped him ; how Fanny Magnum had helped him—far beyond her promises. All the world through there is a good deal of such assistance given in love affairs. It would wound their self-complacency to be told so ; but, all the same for that, there are living at this present time in London, at least three or four rather commonplace men (married to lovely wives) who would never have won their brides but for such unacknowledged and unsuspected aid,—this unknown power in problems of billing and cooing.

Being quite unconscious how much had been done for him, Edgar Turrett not unreasonably took the chief merit of the conquest to himself,—not forgetting, however, to load Fanny Magnum with thanks for the encouragement and counsel she had given him at a period when the obstacles to his happiness seemed greatest.

There is no need to tell the particulars of the dozen interviews which passed between the young people in quick succession on Edgar’s reappearance in his old

haunts;—interviews that occurred in Bassingbourne House, or the ‘Abbey Gardens,’ where he was permitted to escort Carry ‘at promenade,’ or in the merchant’s house in Gray Street, into which he made his first entrance under Mrs. Magnum’s wing,—John Bromhead receiving him with cordiality, and Martha extending a rather frigid hand. It is fair to suppose that all the regulation movements of a sentimental duel—the flourishes and feints, the thrusts and parryings, the advances and surprises—were made on both sides with adroitness and grace. Of course there was much waste of sweet phrases and a lavish squandering of expressive glances,—together with an exorbitant amount of trepidation, and anxiety, and fear, and sleeplessness expended on minor points that might just as well have been treated with levity. Doubtless Carry, knowing right well what Edgar wished to say, and having quite settled in her own mind what she should answer to the certain thing (he wished to say) when he should have said it, was more than a few times half vexed he didn’t say it outright, and without skirmishing,—albeit, every time she deemed it was about to be said forthwith, and thought Edgar could not delay the saying it for another minute, her heart beat very fast, and becoming terribly alarmed she wished the saying it had either been got over yesterday, or might be put off till to-morrow. Equally certain is it that, though Edgar (drawing innumerable petty conclusions into one grand conclusion from the thousand delicate signs of Carry’s looks and demeanour, and the thousand little words her lips let drop, and a thousand other little words which they didn’t let drop) was quite sure that Carry would accept him,—he still was on the point of saying, “Oh, dear one, be my wife,” at least three score

times, before with a desperate effort he contrived to utter the words, which, as they quitted his lips, had an extraordinary effect on his nervous system,—striking the light out from his eyes, and causing his knees to feel as though lumps of ice were applied to them, and filling his ears with the singing of innumerable tea-kettles, instead of the sound of his own voice. And may he lie amongst the dead men who doubts that to Edgar it seemed an entire hour, instead of two ticks of a clock, between his ejaculation of those momentous words, and that brief timorous response which, in a flash of time, trimmed up the sun, and dissolved the lumps of ice, and took the innumerable tea-kettles off the fire!

But these and other similar features of the closely consecutive interviews can be imagined by all men and women who have had aught to do with the tender passion.

Time and fine writing need not be expended on them here. They were but the light, trivial prelude to a stirring and memorable after-part,—to which the readers of this practical age will like to hurry on.

Therefore be it known, that on the first day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty, Edgar Turrett rode over the heaths, and over the sweeps, and through the sandy lanes from Merton-Piggott in the highest possible state of elation, bearing glad tidings to Castle Hollow. The sheep-fed turf, and the furzy dells, and the scrubby broom (hiding dry soil, honeycombed and riddled by the borings of countless rabbits) and the wide wolds, blooming with purple heather, were steeped in the glare of a sweltering sun, whose fierce rays burnt the azure firmament to misty whiteness. But he galloped on, cool as a fountain jet,—fresh, as if the scorching heat were the

dew of a May-day dawn. Far otherwise was his horse (not 'Black Baron'—even in his frenzy of love triumph he would have ridden that noble beast with greater caution under the August sun)—flecked with foam-spots, and darkened with sweat that dripped from his heaving flanks, as the rider leaped from his back at the Hollow House door, and ran over the lawn to Aunt Adelaide, who was occupying her favourite seat under the limes.

She was the first to speak.

"My boy," she said, starting up and changing colour at the exultant aspect of his face, "I know what you have come to tell me! Thank God! Oh, from my heart I thank God for making you so happy!"

"Yes," he said, hurriedly, "it is all right. I have hastened to tell you. Oh, Aunt Adelaide, I never loved you a tithe as much as I do now,—now that I love another better than all the world! Where is my grandfather? I must go and tell him all. Carry has promised to be mine, and if she sends me a message to-night, I shall go over to Merton-Piggott to-morrow, to speak with Mr. Bromhead."

And at much about the time when Edgar embraced Aunt Adelaide and made her this hasty communication, Carry entered the old dark parlour in Gray Street, and spoke words which caused her father's eyes to beam with gladness, and his tongue to bless her.

"Dearest father," she said, coming up to him, and kissing him, "you said it would make you very happy, but I am far happier than you."

For an instant he was uncertain what her words signified; but the doubt lasted no longer than a second,—for in the triumph of her guileless eyes, and the glow

of her pure cheek, and the movement of her lips, he discerned at a glance what it was that made her so happy,—so far happier than he.

“What, my pretty bird,” asked the father with mocking tenderness, “are you really caught? And where is the fowler?”

“Oh, do not laugh, papa,” she answered. “Be serious; speak solemnly to me, or else my heart will break with gladness. Oh, dear, dear papa, I wish I could be as good as your daughter ought to be,—as his wife ought to be.”

Then, that her heart might not break with gladness, the child threw her arms round her father’s neck, and laying her little head on his great broad breast (even as it had often nestled there when it was far smaller), she found relief from her excess of bliss in an overflow of tears.

When she became more calm, John Bromhead gained from her further particulars; how Edgar had walked with her that morning for an hour and more in the garden; how he had implored her to be his wife; how she had given him her hand to kiss; how he had made her promise to speak forthwith to her father, and send him a message that coming evening—informing him if Mr. Bromhead would grant him a special interview.

Whereupon John Bromhead turned to his desk, and wrote this brief note to his daughter’s accepted suitor:—

“MY DEAR MR. EDGAR TURRETT,

“I will not trust myself at this present time to tell you how delighted I am with the intelligence I have just received from Caroline’s lips. Do me the favour of calling on me to-morrow at my place of busi-

ness, where I shall be all the morning, from nine to one o'clock. Perhaps you will then be able to say if your grandfather will permit me to do myself the honour of coming over to Castle Hollow, and paying him my respects.

“ Believe me, dear sir,

“ Your sincere friend,

“ JOHN BROMHEAD.”

Having despatched this epistle by the hand of a sure messenger, the merchant spent the remainder of the day with Carry and his wife, intensely happy ; for, if the latter was grave and troubled in her countenance, a triumph of joy animated the former.

It was not till Carry had retired to bed at a later hour than usual, that the husband and wife had serious discourse upon the important event of the day—an event which they had both looked forward to for many a week, but with widely diverse feelings ; an event which the father regarded as the realization of all his most cherished hopes, and which the mother had shuddered at with a presentiment of coming disaster.

“ Husband,” said Martha, dolefully, “ make me one promise, only one promise.”

“ What, Martha,” he replied, turning upon her reproachfully, and with unusual sharpness. “ Wont you share in this last great joy of my closing years ? I only ask you to share my joys. I have never neglected to sympathize with your troubles.”

“ Make me one promise, John,” she repeated, changing her doleful tone for one of earnest solemnity,—“ by your love for me, make it. It is not an unreasonable one.”

“ Well, well,” returned the merchant, laying aside

his irritability, "what is it? If it be reasonable, you know I shan't refuse it. Not many is the time that I have said 'nay' to your desires."

"Dear John," the wife pleaded, "don't hasten on this match. For a short time, when you first proposed it to me, it warmed into life all the wicked pride of my corrupt nature, and captivated my foolish imagination, as it has captivated yours. But the more I ponder over it, the more I abhor it. Mr. Edgar Turrett, I don't doubt, is what the world calls an honourable and high-spirited gentleman,—but he's at best naught more than a horse-racing, card-playing, theatre-going, wine-loving sportsman. Have you ever heard of his doing anything grander than winning steeple-chases? Do you believe that, if I spoke to him of the love of God for us fallen creatures, he would feel anything else but a contempt for me as a miserable half-crazy woman, who persists in troubling her head about what she can't understand? Ought such a man to be our daughter's husband?"

"Tut, woman," exclaimed John Bromhead, sharply again; "is this your reasonable petition?—that I should push the young man aside, when I have encouraged him to pay his addresses to my daughter, and have invited him to my house (though he is a churchman and one of the foremost quality, and I am a dissenter and a tradesman), and when I have this very day sent him a note accepting his suit?"

"No, no, John," answered Martha, repudiating, without irritation, the charge preferred against her. "I am not so unreasonable or 'contrary' as that. Much shame to me if I were. I would have you act honourably to Mr. Edgar Turrett, as you have acted honourably to all the world. But you needn't hurry on the mar-

riage; that is all I ask of you. Take time—as much time as you can. The child (I warrant you) will be in no haste to leave us, and we may as well keep her near our own hearth as long as possible; and if Mr. Turrett really loves her he'll be glad to wait for her,—ay, though it be for seven years, twice told."

"Seven years!" said John, catching up the words with dismay.

"No, no, don't be so sharp upon me, John," interposed the wife, once more saving herself from misapprehension. "I don't ask you to wait seven years—the words of my lips were but a scriptural figure;—don't have the marriage till the child has come of age. Wait that much, and you'll be to me the good husband you've been all the days since we married."

"That would be nearer four than three years, Martha."

"I know it."

"It would be too long."

"Oh, no, John," pleaded Martha, "don't say so—it won't be too long for us to have the girl singing about our own house!"

"True, true," replied the father, softening at this aspect of the question, "it wouldn't be too long for that. But——"

"Nay, nay," interposed Martha, at first naively, and then with increased earnestness, "don't make use of 'but,' for 'but' is herald to 'no.' Oh, dear husband, if your judgment and memory (both of which are always charitable to me) bear witness that, in spite of my vexatious and worrying temper (for which may God pardon me for dear Christ's sake!) I have striven to order myself lowly and reverently towards you, and in all matters of difference between us have dutifully and modestly

yielded to your will—give me my way with the child this once. If you don't grant me this, I shall go to the death, believing that your judgment and memory are against me."

What could John Bromhead say to this appeal?

For one—two—three—four—five minutes, he maintained silence, pondering it all over, with his face turned away from Martha, who, leaning forward in her chair, kept her eyes intently fixed upon him.

At the expiration of those five minutes, the husband was subdued.

"Martha," he said, "you shall have your own way. Whatever may come of it, don't ever in your heart accuse me of not considering your wishes."

"Oh, dear John," cried the wife, starting from her seat and coming close up to her husband, "may my heart be dust and ashes, ere ever it becomes such a nest of wickedness as to do that!"

So, as Fanny Magnum had foretold, Martha gained her point; and it was decided that Carry's wedding should not take place till she was twenty-one years of age.

The next morning, Edgar had an interview with John Bromhead at the counting-house—an interview from which (notwithstanding the hard stipulation that the wedding was not to be celebrated till Carry had come of age) the young man retired in great satisfaction. The merchant received him with warm cordiality, and spoke to him with the most complimentary candour. "You see, Edgar (I may as well at once begin to lay aside that stiff prefix of 'Mister'), I should not accept you so gladly as the husband of my only child, if I did not believe you to be a young man of high honour—in whom I can place the fullest confidence. Let me

commence our closer intercourse (which I sincerely trust will always be unbroken) by stating to you exactly how my worldly affairs stand, and how much I contemplate doing for my daughter, and her husband. I am a richer man than the world supposes. It is known that I have never been a greedy man—that, instead of clutching at everything within my reach, I have left corn for other gleaners, and that much of what I have acquired has been distributed again. It would, therefore, I doubt not, surprise the ‘light lands’ to learn how much I really possess. Apart from a lucrative business (which, at my death, will be bequeathed to my faithful servant and tried friend, Mr. Michael Stott), I have £50,000 of accumulated wealth. That considerable property I regard as my daughter’s. At her marriage, I shall settle £30,000 of it upon trustees, for the benefit of her and her children after my death; the other £20,000 I shall give to her husband, on her wedding-day, for his uncontrolled enjoyment and disposal. This is the arrangement I contemplate making of the riches with which it has pleased God to bless me; and it is right that I should inform you, this is an arrangement which fully meets the approval of my dear wife, who is amply provided for by settlements of other property, which she can bequeath as she wishes; and, doubtless, her wish will be to bequeath it to her child. Whatever more money I earn between this and my death will be given to the poor.”

To a slight protest made by Edgar against a continuance of these monetary revelations, John Bromhead answered, “My dear young friend, you need not assure me that you love her, and not her money;—if I could suspect the reverse to be the case, you would not be sitting with me here to-day. But I have an object in

speaking thus plainly with you about money affairs. Usually, when young people come together, it is the elders of both who arrange such matters ; but I have reasons for thinking that your grandfather would much dislike discussing such subjects with me. What those reasons are, I need not state. It is sufficient for you to know that such reasons exist ; and you will oblige me, in consideration of them, by yourself briefly stating to the Squire what my intentions are, and assuring him that I shall esteem it a great favour if, when he permits me to come over to Castle Hollow to pay my respects to him and your aunt, he will abstain from uttering one syllable relative to my child's fortune. You must help me in this matter, Edgar."

"My dear sir," the young man answered, "your consideration for my dear grandfather recalls to my mind that he this morning bade me say he would to-day drive over from Castle Hollow, and do himself the pleasure of calling upon you and Mrs. Bromhead, in Gray Street."

"Indeed, indeed !" said John Bromhead, the red blood springing to his forehead. "The Squire coming to Gray Street ! When will he be there ?"

"At one o'clock."

"Then, my dear young friend, say good-bye to me now—for I must write a few business letters, and then get home—in time to receive him. Now, be off !—I should not be surprised if you find a little girl in Gray Street, quite ready to listen to idle talk."

When the ancient family coach of the Turretts arrived in Gray Street, shortly before one o'clock, and drew up before John Bromhead's house, the merchant was standing, uncovered, on the door-steps,—ready to welcome his old friend, and his old enemy. Aunt Adelaide

was in the carriage by her father's side, and old Tom in "high livery" descended from his place behind, to open the door for the Squire and his daughter.

"Sir," said John Bromhead, with much good feeling, as Adelaide led the blind Squire into Martha's drawing-room (she called it a tea-room,—the wealthy members of 'the persuasion' always called their drawing-rooms, tea-rooms), "do let my first words be an assurance that I am touched to the bottom of my heart by your delicacy in coming to my house, before I have been over to Castle Hollow to pay you my respects."

"My dear old friend," answered the Squire, holding out his hand, "I should never have been a stranger to these walls. But I am rightly punished for delaying reconciliation so long; for now I have come,—I can neither see you, nor your lady, nor Miss Caroline—to whom I owe so much. Where is she?"

"I am here, sir," said Carry, coming forward—readily but timorously, and taking the hand of the blind man.

"Dear child,—your soft voice gives an old man leave to do this," returned the Squire, pressing her hand to his lips.

Whereupon, Carry with characteristic simplicity and grace, placing the kissed hand upon the veteran's shoulder, and standing upon tip-toe responded to his salutation by kissing him on the lips,—even as she was wont to kiss her own father.

So there was peace once more between John Bromhead and Antony Turrett.

They lunched together,—pledging each other in old wine; and when the meeting terminated, the Squire and his daughter went back to the Hollow House with promises that John Bromhead and his wife and daughter would soon return their visit.

Even Martha was pleased with her new friends.

The night of that same day witnessed a long discussion in the Hollow House Library between the grand-sire and his boy ;—a discussion which was closed by the former saying emphatically, “ Well, lad, he’s a dissenter, and I wish he wasn’t one ;—but John Brom-head is a gentleman of fine feelings,—and for many a day I’ve been nothing better than an old fool.”

CHAPTER II.

THE RECTOR DOESN'T DANCE.

Few are the men who, when they recall the sorrows of the past, cannot enumerate sharp pangs and heavy periods of dull sorrow, which have come to them from devotion to women ; but there lives no true and lofty-natured man who does not believe that love lavished upon woman—such as she appears in this glorious existence, which fools alone deem prosaic—graceful in form and beautiful in face, generous and truthful, tender in sympathy and strong in purpose—will to the end of time confer more happiness (over and above the accidental and exceptional griefs it may create) on those who lavish it than they will ever gain from the ecstasy of young pride (exulting over its first triumphs), and the success that crowns years of honourable endeavour, and all the subtle pleasures that cover an intellect devoted to Art, and all the thousand gratifications that wait upon the beck of wealth.

Such was Edgar's faith ;—and his was not a nature that erred through excess of romantic sentimentality.

It is true he as yet only knew the joys of love. Perchance his hours of anguish were yet to come! Perchance he was one of those favoured few for whom roses blossom on stalks that are free of thorns!

Hitherto he had never cared for woman as lovers care,—had indeed never expended the poetry of youth in fervent homage to woman's sex. Like an honest gentleman he had ever regarded women reverentially, believing them the peculiar guardians of those sacred qualities of mind and temper and outward grace which, in the person of his aunt Adelaide, filled the old 'Hollow House' with gentle quietude, and made him step softly whenever he approached her. But heretofore he had expended all the force of his athletic frame and brave heart on those field-sports which he followed with an enthusiasm and entirety of ardour which can scarcely be appreciated by young men of this generation, who have so many more amusements and pursuits than a young country squire of the 'old time.'

And from its very novelty, love took the stronger hold upon him.

Not that it engrossed all his thoughts, or gave him distaste for former pleasures. The case was far otherwise. It merely gave him new occupation,—the chivalric worship of the girl who had promised to be his; but, though it gave him no more than this one fresh task, it coloured all his old pastimes, rendering them a hundred-fold more attractive.

The outline of his future was much the same as it had ever been; but as he now regarded it, every point of the prospect revealed some minor beauty, either recently

developed, or previously unheeded. He had from boyhood always vaguely presumed that one day he would be the Squire of Castle Hollow, that one day he would wed a virtuous English girl, and that amidst rural pleasures and business his days would move on with dignity,—if not with *eclat*. As for facts,—the present was much as he had anticipated it would be, and (with the exception that greater wealth bade fair to come to him than he had ever hoped to possess) the future lay before him much as it had ever done. But here was the grand difference;—he had begun to contemplate closely things more important and higher than material facts.

He could not be always at Merton-Piggott. In the ‘old time,’ though lovers were allowed greater freedom and privileges in certain departments of what may be termed the picturesque demonstrations of devotion than they are now-a-days,—they were in other respects kept at greater distance. The days of the minuet had ways of wooing widely different from those of the polka. When he was not honoured with a special invitation to Gray Street, Edgar (unless he could frame an ingenious excuse for a supplementary visit) was expected to keep away from John Bromhead’s house, save on stated occasions, when Martha had ceremoniously informed him that “Caroline would be gratified by his presence.” He had therefore plenty of time on his hands between his acceptance and the commencement of the shooting-season; and he employed some of it not unwisely, in strolling along the sea-shore, under the white, and yellow, and green-hued cliffs,—now watching a brood of infant smugglers as they came toddling over the shingle from the gullies in which their parents’ huts were hidden; now sitting on a ledge of crag, watching

the breakers, as they foamed crisply and merrily against the beach, or (when the wind changed from east to west) regarding the waves as they rose in long, low, heavy ridges, and fell upon the shore with sullen rumbling flaps of sound.

Very happy he was in these solitary walks! The life to come was so bewitchingly bright, no wonder he thought much of it. Though he had loved Carry in the first instance solely for herself, and would have sought her hand if she had not had a penny; it was still a far from disagreeable fact that she would bring him wealth which, even amongst the great nobles of the country, would have made her run after as an heiress. He may not be called sordid, because this circumstance of his position often occurred to his mind, and on each recurrence seemed yet more a subject for congratulation. Had he sought her in the first instance for her wealth (which was so far greater than he had expected), those riches might have presented to his calm reflection considerations the reverse of pleasing. But as it was her love only he had cared for, that love enabled him to contemplate with unqualified satisfaction all the benefits attendant upon it.

So visions rose before him of modes and fashions of coming life. By-and-by, when Castle Hollow should be his (he did not exactly think of death as the servant of his ambition, but simply jumped over a grave in his imaginative canter, without stopping to think who lay in it) he would free the estate from the last of those incumbrances which his great-grandfather had fixed upon it. Lawyer Loggett should be paid off. As occasion offered he would purchase land contiguous to the ancestral domain. Possibly he would invest some of his wealth in the fen-country. Anyhow he

would exert himself to reclaim portions of 'the waste' on the old estate, and would employ capital also in promoting a more liberal kind of agriculture than that which was as yet practised in the 'light lands.' For it must be remarked that Edgar was a practical fellow, with a full allowance of English energy, and English distaste for a do-nothing life; and he entertained a hope of being useful (in quiet fashion) to his generation,—a hope which, naturally in a countryman, took a rural form. As for his pleasures, by far the most prominent features of each day-dream,—he would keep a hospitable home, filling the 'Hollow House' at fit seasons with old Cambridge chums, and hunting friends from the corn-country, and the gentry of the light lands. He would endeavour to maintain the 'old world' life of the wide region, which was menaced with dissolution, now that the old Duke of Dovercourt was no more. He would get up a first-rate subscription pack of hounds to replace the hunting establishment which was at that very time being broken up at Melford House; possibly he might see the way to be himself 'Master of the Hunt.' Anyhow he would build new stables to the Hollow House (the old mansion would need no alteration,—it was quite grand enough for a prudent squire with £4,000 per annum), and the stables should be filled with the best cattle money could procure. Carry, of course, was to have money liberally expended upon her—in carriages and attendants (brilliant with Turrett liveries) in conservatories and choicest garniture for her drawing-rooms, in jewels and rare ponies. For it must be remembered, in these sunny day-dreams all the undertakings and grand doings of Edgar Turrett, Esquire, Possible Justice of the Peace, and Deputy-Lieutenant of the 'light lands,' were

to be entered upon, continued, and finished, with the advice, criticism, co-operation, and enthusiastic approval of Caroline, the wife of the aforesaid Edgar Turrett.

Vain dreams these !

Ay ! but how many far better men than Edgar Turrett have entertained hopes less innocent ? How many good men have had their vain dreams also, until they have been roused and saved from the sin of vain and profitless lives by seemingly trivial events, to which the presumption of ignorance gives the name of ‘accidents.’

Whilst Edgar was thus building airy castles on the sea-shore, Caroline was passing her days at Merton-Piggott not less happily and profitably. Of course it was not enough for her to estimate Edgar as readers do, who like the young man for his honesty, his manliness, his affection for his grandfather and aunt, and, above all other considerations, for his success. He was a hero to her,—brave, unselfish, generous ; and the dear foolish child began to trouble her little heart with thinking that she wasn’t good enough to be the wife of such a rare man, and never should be good enough. She began to lay plans for making herself better, and, unlike many framers of excellent resolutions, she began to put those plans in action. They were very simple ones. She would spend less time on satin-stitch, and more on the reading of grave and instructive books ; she would spend less of her pocket-money on herself, and more on works of charity and subscriptions to religious societies ; she would more frequently step in on that poor old Mrs. Trussler, and that irksome old gentleman, Mr. Nullaby (one of her father’s superannuated and pensioned clerks, of whom the merchant

had many), and cheer them up with merry gossip. She would be more regular and indefatigable in her duties as 'little Fan's' instructress; more habitually studious to be an inspiring companion to her melancholy mother; more earnest in her devotions at meeting and church (for of late, John Bromhead had encouraged her to attend the services at St. Mary's, as well as those of 'the persuasion'); more self-forgetful, more devout. Little, insignificant plans these! But it must be remembered, it was only in such small things that so good a girl as Carry could hope to make herself better.

To Fanny Magnum, of course, she was very communicative about her intentions and doings, regarding that much-loved friend as a greater benefactress than ever, now that she had secured her lover in *some* measure (Carry was modest enough to say in every measure) through the patronage of Bassingbourne House.

"Yes, my beauty," said Fanny, well pleased to take her full share of the credit, but not shutting her eyes to the fact that an artist's genius is of little avail unless he has the proper tools to work with, "you've made a brilliant game, at the very opening of the day; and I've had just enough to do with your success, to be able to congratulate you on it with much delightful self-complacency."

"How unspeakably pleasant," exclaimed Carry, to her friend, "it is to think that now, all our lives long, we shall be neighbours and close companions! We shall always be driving to and fro to see each other; and when Fan grows up into a dazzling arch little belle, she'll come over to Castle Hollow to help me to get ready for my parties. At my annual Christmas

ball (of course, I shall have *one* grand ball every Christmas), she'll be 'the young lady who's staying in the house.' "

"Bless you, my beauty," answered Fanny, "when the time comes for you to preside over splendid gatherings at the Hollow House, you'll have become such a grand lady of the county that you'll not care to have a doctor's daughter for your particular friend. Of course you will not be otherwise than very kind and condescending to us, but you'll say, 'It's just as well to keep Mrs. Magnum in her place, and not encourage her preposterous notion that she got me my husband—just as if I wanted any one to get a husband for me!' Well, well, Carry—I and Fan, like modest, sensible people, will take what we can get, and come smiling to your 'second parties,' just as if we hadn't heard the gossip about the 'first ones.' "

To which absurd banter Carry replied with vehemence, "Don't talk such nonsense, Fanny. I don't like it. You're only laughing, I know ;—but it isn't the best side of you that's laughing, when you make such jokes. You've no business to amuse yourself by picturing me a heartless woman of the world. You may dress me up as a fairy, and put a gold wand in my hand, and carry me off to the Assembly Rooms, for everyone to laugh at me if you like ; but you shan't put my heart into fancy costume, as you have done just now."

"Well, Carry, speaking seriously," returned Mrs. Magnum—uttering the first words gravely, but without a tinge of asperity—"I can assure you that my nonsense contains a kernel of sound, good truth—though the truth is one which (I needn't be told) will never apply to you. There's not a woman in all the 'light lands' who has done half as much in the way of

match-making as I have. Of all amusements a woman can have—match-making is the one that suits her best, and (what's more) *ought* to suit her best. I revel in it. I wish I had six daughters instead of one, simply in order that I might have the pleasure of marrying them all off well—for, mind me, I never yet made up a match that didn't turn out well. All my matches wear like the best silk—they look splendidly when they are new, and even in old age they don't wear as shabby as those of inferior make. They dye, turn, cut up, clean, alter—and (when all is up with them) make first-rate linings."

To this Carry responded with a ringing peal of laughter. Fanny Magnum had such a droll way of putting things. Moreover, Carry was well pleased to hear such high testimony borne to the excellence of her friend's "matches,"—albeit the witness to character was the maker herself.

"My dear," continued Fanny, in her droll way—this time finishing her sentence seriously, whereas the last had opened gravely, though it closed in broad farce—"I began match-making when I was sixteen years old, and I've kept it on ever since. Before I was married, people used to call me a coquette, and a jilt, because I used to flirt with every unmarried man who appeared in the Assembly Rooms. Bless you, I wasn't love-making for myself, but for other people. I used regularly to go out man-fishing. Everything was done methodically and according to rules of art. First, I threw in my ground-bait (any ordinary politeness did for that), then I selected and fixed on my fly (I was always very particular about my flies; I would use none which weren't made of the finest adulation and most delicate irony that could be procured

in the market), then I began to whip the stream (I never had to do that long), then I played with the nibblers (what a crowd of nibblers there were, to be sure!) then a huge voracious fellow would snap my fly and make off with it (you have no conception, my dear, how voracious the 'right sort of fish' is!) then came the sport of trolling—letting him run out and forcing him to come in, worrying him and fatiguing him, keeping him clear of the reeds, and every now and then seeing him throw his big tail up with a splash above the waters of caution (oh, what a delicious game it was!) At last, I would land him; and when I had done so, I would take my hook out (it was a rule with me never to let anyone see the fly with which my fish had been caught), and lay him on a white napkin, and put him in a basket, and dress him up all pretty with sprigs of green parsley, and give him to one of my friends. Heigh-o—oh, the times upon times when I had this fun! Of course, my living here in the town near Assembly Rooms, which is the great fish-preserve of the 'light lands,' was a great advantage to one with my angling propensities. Well, my dear, I married my sisters off; and there are now living no less than seven ladies in the 'light lands,' married into first-rate county houses, who'd never have had their husbands if it hadn't been for me; but of them all only two (and they are Lady Farrell and Kate Madison), have treated me well, and shown a proper sense of my services. Each of the others (of course, they never quarrelled with me—people *can't* quarrel with me), after she'd been married a short time, sent me back with her compliments the basket, and napkin, and parsley sprigs in which her present of fish had been sent to her—and never again talked to me about my pet pastime of man-angling."

Of course this vivacious description of her friend's man-angling propensities was received by Carry with frequent interruptions of laughter; and when it was concluded, the merry girl said, "Well, Fanny, I shan't be so ungrateful. I shall keep my basket, and napkin, and parsley sprigs, and have them placed upon the table, as a centre-dish, whenever you come to Castle Hollow to dine with me. We shall be always as close friends as we have been."

"No, no—we shan't," answered Fanny, with cheery good sense, "we shall be good and right loving friends, but not such close ones. Up to this time, you've only been my echo—and a sweet musical echo too; but now you'll have a voice of your own—and ere long weaker voices to echo it. Every day now, you'll find yourself growing more and more a woman—thinking more for yourself, and caring less to lean on me."

"Upon my word," answered Carry, with frankness, "I feel sure you are right, and that I have already grown years older than I was a month since."

"Of course, you have, darling," responded Fanny, laying aside her graceful levity all of a sudden, and speaking with unaffected solemnity; "you are changing fast, and the change is all for the better; so I can't regret it. We have all of us to live down our former selves; and if it is sad for women of my age to think how fast we are living down old joys, it is an enduring consolation to know that we are also steadily living down old sorrows."

So strangely constituted was that woman's mind, its animating brightness was ever followed by clouds of gloom! Into its texture were so cunningly woven the finest threads of mirth and sadness, that it resembled those banners, delicately wrought of silk and precious

metal, which, while they flutter in the breeze, appear golden or purple, according as the sun's rays fall upon them. But ordinary spectators saw only the sprightly, buoyant woman of society. Her husband knew each secret of her heart; and Carry had seen enough of it to be assured that there was in it a mystery she could not read; and three or four old friends had reasons for suspecting that it contained the memories of troubles which no human sympathy might presume to touch; but, beyond this small circle, there was scarcely a person of her acquaintance who did not speak of her as "a woman who had never known a real sorrow, and whom no amount of sorrow could dishearten."

It may not be supposed that discussion about "the engagement" was confined to Edgar and Caroline and their immediate friends. There was scarce a person in Merton-Piggott, or for twenty miles round, who had not words to say about the matter. Upon the whole, public opinion regarded the arrangement with favour; even the least amiable exponents thereof admitting that in a free country young persons ought to be allowed to marry whom they pleased, so long as they paid due regard to canonical prohibitions, and did not 'go to church' without the consent of their parents or their appointed guardians. 'The quality' did not indulge in unkind reflections on the countenance given to dissent by an old Church-and-State family; and the 'connexion' took comfort to itself by saying, "You see, we are as good as anybody else, and a vast deal better; we can marry with the county gentry when we wish,—which is only now and then." At Merton-Piggott, indeed, there was a brief hiss of dissatisfaction; Mr. Nibcheek, the leading 'persuasion' tailor, throwing out suggestions that "the con-

nexion was being sold," and that "there were traitors in the camp." But Mr. Nibcheek was speedily silenced by more prudent members of the 'persuasion,' who, with eyes fixed on the Test and Corporation Acts, reminded him that it would not do for "their party" to break with the powerful John Bromhead. So Mr. Nibcheek refrained from further criticism until the end of September, when the merchant—who had never before patronized the tailor's shop—gave a large order for coats, breeches, slops, and waistcoats, which the benevolent chief of the 'connexion' in due course distributed amongst the poor of the town. On this, Mr. Nibcheek suddenly altered his opinions on "the interesting topic," and, recanting in the most honourable and high-minded manner imaginable, maintained that John Bromhead was the true marrow of 'persuasion' principles, and that his daughter's engagement would strengthen the 'connexion' prodigiously.

At the 'town-club' Stephen Dowse was openly congratulated on the event by Mr. Tilcot, who declared that he was immeasurably elated by the intelligence, and that nothing was more likely than the contemplated union to counteract the evil effects of turnip husbandry. It was very absurd, but not the less true, that the members of the 'town-club,' and also certain important members of the 'persuasion'—Mrs. Camberwell amongst others—were pleased to regard the match as the result of a subtle policy set in action and brought to maturity by the bank agent. "You see, sir," observed Mr. Tilcot to Stephen, "it is no difficult task for a man with two eyes in his head to see who has done it; and very deeply indebted to you, I am sure, must your cousin feel herself for the influence you exercise on her husband."

Whereunto Stephen Dowse responded, "Well, Tilcot, of course, the affair hasn't had my disapproval; and, of course, John Bromhead has felt that, in countenancing Mr. Edgar Turrett's affection for his daughter, he would not displease her mother's family; but still I should be very sorry to have you imply that I govern my cousin's family. No, no, Tilcot; every man ought to be master of his own house. I am only glad that the master in Gray Street doesn't oppose good counsel, when a tried friend gives it."

In saying which, if Stephen Dowse didn't tell what school-boys call 'a crammer,' he certainly was on the verge of that sin. For, in real truth, Stephen, instead of being gratified with Caroline's engagement, was greatly nettled by it. He was stung to think that the dissenter, over whom he had been wont to assume social superiority, should in the eyes of all the 'light lands' be about to ally himself closely with an old county family, who were of a condition infinitely above that of a country bank agent. He was also very indignant at what he was pleased to term "the dark ways of his cousin Martha," who, until the engagement was an accomplished fact, never whispered to him a syllable about the sentimental intercourse of the young people. "To think of it," he observed many scores of times to Mrs. Dowse, "that that meek creature, who never had any of the true Dowse spirit—or she wouldn't have married a dissenter—being so 'dark!' and wanting to ride over her own blood in that way! That's what comes to a man who is fool enough to stick by his kin, as I have stuck by her!" So, having some grounds for offence with the circumstances of the engagement, Stephen had conceived a strong dislike to the engagement itself, and an active

antagonism to one of the parties to it,—namely, Edgar Turrett.

“I’ll be bound,” said Stephen, warmly, to himself, “there’s no good in that young fellow, and that nothing but disaster will come of his pretended attachment to that child, who is young enough to be his daughter. He’s only looking after her money; and a pitiful scamp a man must be who can pretend he cares for a girl’s heart, when he is only looking after her cash-box. But I’ll soon find out all I can about him. If I am not mistaken, horse-racing and card-playing must have produced for him a handsome lot of debts somewhere. I’ll make a few inquiries about him. Indeed, I shouldn’t be doing my duty to my own blood, if I didn’t make inquiries about him.”

At the period when Stephen Dowse came to this decision, if Edgar had heard of the bank-agent’s resolution, it would have provoked him to laughter rather than indignation; but incidents (which will, in due course, be narrated in these pages), were soon to occur, out of which prying curiosity and petty malice would find it an easy task to frame a story most injurious to the young Squire’s reputation. And it may as well be remarked here that a man in Stephen Dowse’s position has many peculiar, and even terrible, opportunities for becoming acquainted with a certain class of facts, which the private individuals whom they most nearly concern would especially dislike to have published to the world. Doctors of medicine are the holders of many delicate secrets; and in countries where auricular confession is generally exercised, priests have committed to their keeping facts, the revelations of which would make strange stir in the world; but, more than physicians or priests, the bank-agents of free Eng-

land are the dreaded guardians of delicate transactions, the exposure of which would make strong men quake with fear and tremble with shame. Strange inquisitors and fearful tyrants (all the more fearful because their social position is so humble, whilst their power is so prodigious) are those men who hold with observant, calculating silence the money secrets of rural districts. They are a mysterious fraternity, working darkly with hidden correspondents. No wonder that haughty Squires generously load them with game in the shooting season, and that small farmers and petty traders cap them the whole year round !

But the engagement of the lovers was not the only matter for the 'light lands' to feel an interest in during August and September.

Merton-Piggott was preparing for its annual fair, which, even so late as the year 1820, lasted for full six weeks. The fair was the carnival of the year to the old town. During its continuance, the judges visited Merton-Piggott, to dispense the King's justice in the Court-house ; and, together with their lordships, came the learned members of the bar ('gentlemen of the long robe,' they were most frequently termed in the 'light lands'), renowned for eloquence and wit, and disinterested devotion to their clients, whom they would serve to the utmost at every risk ; "ay, though they incurred the displeasure of the court, and went forth into the world, knowing that their prospects were blighted by the frown of power." In honour of these distinguished guests, the Assize Ball had for generations been held. Briefless juniors attending the Circuit in this present year of 1863, can scarcely realize the excitement which assizes created in towns like Merton-Piggott fifty years since, or imagine the respect

paid to 'the bar' by all classes of society. The members of that noble profession were not (as now) permitted to travel by ordinary public conveyances; but had (for the sake of dignity) 'to post,' or ride the circuit on horseback. They were not allowed to exercise ingratiating arts on the humbler branch of the legal profession. The high misdemeanour of shaking a solicitor by the hand in an assize town during assizes was visited on the offending counsel by a fine to the wine fund of the mess; and the flagrant crime of dining at an attorney's table, during the same period, brought upon the servile and unworthy member of the bar sentence of expulsion from the mess. So long as assizes lasted, the counsellors were the lions of every social gathering—young ladies preferring them as partners before the wearers of martial uniforms. Such was the state of things at Merton-Piggott in 1820.

Other attractions came at fair-time. The dramatic corps of Mr. Shakspeare Wylie took possession of the theatre (already mentioned in these pages), and performed the plays of our most celebrated dramatic writers, before houses that were less critical than crowded. The races (run upon the heath two miles out of town), also brought together the leading gentry of the 'light lands' from King's Heath to the sea. The fate of the Merton-Piggott theatre and the present character of the races have been told in a previous chapter of this work.

For the six weeks of fair time, the old town was densely crowded—every bed in tavern and private house being occupied. Even the quiet members of 'the persuasion' kept open house and table during that period; for, though worldly pleasure was one of its prominent features, the fair was an institution

without which life could not have been maintained amongst the most austere and ascetic circles of the 'light lands.' Thrifty dames came to it (from remote farm-houses, in which their days were chiefly spent in prudent toil) to purchase 'winter stores' of grocery and clothing, and dispose of home-spun fabrics and the produce of their dairies and farm-yards. Business was the substance and foundation of the fair; pleasure merely its outward tinsel and garniture. To take part in that business, London tradesmen sent down waggons, heavily laden with goods, to tempt 'light land' customers to buy upon their own ground—whereas, at the present date, the buyers of that locality make their orders in London, and have their purchases sent down by rail to Merton-Piggott. The consequence was that the fair, as the grand period for arranging and settling, for opening and closing all important business operations, was flocked to by industrious workers not less than by pleasure-seekers.

With the return of the fair in 1820, an attempt was made to rouse amongst 'the quality' that gaiety which had, in a great measure, disappeared since the death of the Duke of Dovercourt, at the commencement of the year. It was decided amongst certain leading ladies (of whom Fanny Magnum was one) that sufficient respect had been paid to the bereavement of Melford House, and that the time had come when the assembly-balls (discontinued since his Grace's death) might with propriety be recommenced with the customary assize ball. The ladies saw clearly that, compared with former balls, it would meet with small success—as more than one half of the patrician families of the district were away from home (on the

continent, or at fashionable watering-places), or would decline to appear at county festivities whilst her Grace the Dowager Duchess of Dovercourt remained in seclusion and mourning. The absence of Colonel Bell at Bath was also regarded as a reason why they should not entertain sanguine hopes for their undertaking; but, as the Master of Ceremonies had, in a most urbane epistle, intimated his regret that he could not at present return to Merton-Piggott, and had deputed Colonel Ospringe to discharge his arduous duties, it was felt that they had the potent master's countenance for their endeavour, and also a very good substitute for the admired arbiter of taste.

It was therefore resolved that the assize ball should take place as usual.

And the assize ball did take place.

It was a memorable entertainment; memorable as a failure, and memorable as an occasion when the Reverend Spencer Reeve (Archdeacon Lovegrove's successor in the Rectory of Merton-Piggott) inflicted a great shock on public opinion.

Heretofore the new rector had seen little of his parishioners in society. He had not been more than six weeks in the town, and had during that time been much occupied with the irksome labour of settling himself in his new home: arranging his library, and silently studying the aspect of affairs round him. He had already preached twelve times in St. Mary's church; and though his sermons were plain and earnest declarations of old truths, they had an uncomfortable air of novelty to their auditors, who, with regard to things spiritual and ecclesiastical, were strongly opposed to change. Whereas, Dr. Lovegrove always sent his congregation home to their hot mid-day

dinners, or their substantial 'Sunday teas' (the old world of Merton-Piggott got through a tremendous amount of eating on the Lord's Day), with a pleasant sense that the world was going on all comfortably, just as its Creator had predetermined it should go on; the new rector, being of another school and style, dismissed the worshippers from St. Mary's Church with a painful suspicion that they had all their lives long been very wicked people, although they had never imagined such to be the case. At first, the towns-people were simply astonished at the new rector's addresses, even as any industrious, honest, sober, and benevolent citizen might feel astonished if, on turning out of his house one morning, he found every wall in every street placarded with announcements that he was a slug-gard, knave, drunkard, and cheat. But by the end of the third Sunday, Merton-Piggott had sufficiently recovered its presence of mind to be able to ask "what it all meant?" Then household criticism quickened. Mr. Counsellor Gnatt (a smart and vigorous septuagenarian, who would doubtless have been a judge, if he had qualified himself for the bench by the exercise of his profession), informed Mrs. Counsellor Gnatt (a lady whose wealth was believed by credulous friends to have made the counsellor idle in his youth, and ermineless in his old age) that "he thought Mr. Reeve, for so young a man, expressed his opinions a great deal too freely." The venerable Mrs. Trussler observed to her maid: "The new rector wont suit me. He has such queer, painful ways with him, that I can't go to sleep during his sermon. I'll try him a Sunday or two longer, and if I still find he wont give me my nap, I shall go off to St. Peter's and finish my days in quiet under Mr. Mopus. Mr. Mopus is no great scholar, and

doesn't come of a better family than myself, but he's easy-going."

Said Dr. Magnum to Fanny, nodding his head gravely: "I do sincerely trust he wont set the town on fire."

Whereunto Fanny replied with much spirit:—"If he does, I'll be the first to call out the engines."

On the whole, public opinion was uneasy, anticipating that the Rev. Spencer Reeve belonged to a new order of things, and had been appointed to the living by the new Bishop of Sedghassock, for the express purpose of turning Merton-Piggott topsy-turvy. The bishop had already fulfilled Dr. Lovegrove's prediction that episcopal zeal would speedily bring about important changes in the ecclesiastical affairs of the 'light lands.' Already seven beneficed clergymen who had for years past been accustomed to reside in Merton-Piggott, with their wives and families (said clergy driving out to their churches on Sundays to 'do duty'), had received the bishop's orders to quit the town, and live within the bounds of their respective parishes. A terrible bishop he was, having over and above his notorious zeal, a power of subtle irony. Four of the seven clergy, in answer to their 'notices to quit,' wrote to the bishop that their rectory-houses and vicarages were in such a state of dilapidation that they were literally untenable; to which representations the bishop responded:—"I wish to consider the domestic comfort of my clergy, so I'll allow you till the end of the year to make repairs,—but no longer." A fifth incumbent journeyed over to Sedghassock, and bravely bearding the bishop in his palace, said:—"My lord, I haven't a vicarage to repair. There isn't a brick left of the old glebe-house. There literally isn't a roof in the parish I can call my own, except

the one which covers the tithe-barn, and that lets in the rain." To which his lordship responded, smiling in the most friendly manner, "Be thankful, sir, you have the barn. Go and live in that, if you can't procure a more eligible residence: I'll give you six months to re-roof it." Well might Messrs. Tooley and Scantling, the architects, who had built thirty-six new parsonages in the diocese of Beverley during the eight preceding years, exclaim:—"The new bishop of Sedgessock is the man to save the church!"

And by such a bishop had the Rev. Spencer Reeve been appointed to the important and opulent living of Merton-Piggott.

But the old-world inhabitants could not raise any plausible objection to the new-comer; for he was known to be a distinguished mathematician, and as good a classical scholar as Cambridge had produced for many years. It was also ascertained that at Cambridge, where he had for ten years officiated as tutor in an important college, he had obtained a reputation for sincere and fervent piety.

How then came he to inflict a great shock on public opinion?

In this wise.

Until preparations were commenced for the assize ball, the rector had not been formally invited to join the Assembly Rooms. Colonel Bell (whose office it was to transmit such formal invitation) being at Bath, it had been thought better by the Assembly Rooms' Committee to wait for the return of the Master of Ceremonies, ere they asked the Rev. Spencer Reeve to take his natural position in the fashionable club of the 'light lands.' When, however, the assize ball was nigh at hand, and there was no prospect of Colonel

Bell's appearance at it, the Committee suggested that 'the ladies' should invite the rector to the entertainment.

In compliance with this suggestion, Fanny Magnum (as secretary to the Ladies' Committee of Balls) wrote a note to Mr. Reeve, intimating that the ladies of the 'light lands' anticipated the pleasure of seeing him at the Assembly Rooms on the night of the assize ball. To this communication no answer was returned for six days,—the rector being in truth sorely perplexed how to reply to it, and taking that long time to decide what response he should make. He held dancing in abhorrence, as a worldly and most pernicious amusement; he was greatly surprised at being asked to counterance such an objectionable pastime; he even feared that Fanny's polite invitation was a delicate stroke of war on the part of his parishioners, whom he had for weeks past been exhorting from the pulpit to resist the allurements of earthly pleasures. He felt himself on delicate ground. Anxious not to needlessly irritate his congregation, he wrote to a clerical friend at Cambridge, stating the exact circumstances of the case, describing the past and present conditions of Merton-Piggott society (as far as he could ascertain them), and entreating advice. While the conscientious rector was thus anxiously looking for the fine, narrow track of duty, Fanny Magnum and her friends were accusing him of singular want of courtesy, in failing to reply promptly to their invitation.

At length (just two days before the ball) the Rector returned the following answer :—

MY DEAR MRS. MAGNUM,

"I sincerely trust the ladies of the Assembly Rooms' Committee of Balls have not accused

me of insensibility to their kindness, because I have so long delayed to answer a communication by which, I feel sure, both they and you wished to cause me unqualified pleasure. I should have replied sooner, if it had sooner been made plain to me what my reply should be.

“ Allow me, now, to say frankly that I strongly disapprove of dancing, and that I could not be present at the assize ball without violating my sense of duty. Such being the case, I have, not without feelings of regret, to decline the invitation with which I have been honoured; but I trust at no distant time I shall find fit occasion for repeating in my own person the thanks which I now ask you to convey from me to the Ladies’ Committee for their considerate attention.

“ Believe me, my dear Mrs. Magnum,

“ To be your sincere Friend,

“ SPENCER REEVE.”

Now the reader has felt the shock;—but not as Merton-Piggott felt it.

The commotion which Mr. Reeve’s ‘Letter to the Ladies’ created for miles round can scarcely be credited at this day, when it is so very general for clergymen to disapprove of dancing. Never in the memory of living men had Merton-Piggott heard of a rector who “disapproved of dancing.” To give balls, and attend balls, had somehow come to be regarded as points of distinction between the grand ‘Church-and-State’ and ‘Connexion’ parties. Truly the world had come to see strange things. Just as John Bromhead, the dissenter, had permitted his daughter to dance at the Merton-Piggott Assembly Rooms, a rector had arisen in the town who—“disapproved of dancing.”

The assize ball was a failure;—not more than two

hundred persons being present. Lady Farrell was the lady of highest rank in the room. Only one of the Judges made his appearance, and he stayed scarcely ten minutes,—declining to play a rubber in the whist-room. To whatever tune the dancers danced, they talked and thought of one thing. “The Rector doesn’t dance!” was on every one’s lips throughout the flagging entertainment. That memorable announcement, “The Tenth don’t dance,” scattered less consternation through the crowds of a fashionable ball-room, than did this astounding intelligence, “The Rector doesn’t dance.”

The rough side of Edgar Turrett’s nature was up that night. Although he had Carry to dance with him as often as he pleased (without any need for asking Fanny Magnum’s permission), he was in a smouldering fever of indignation.

“Isn’t this a strange, distressing, unaccountable thing about Mr. Reeve?” Mrs. Magnum asked of him at the termination of a long waltz, as he was about to lead Carry off to the refreshment-room. “Did you know anything of him at Cambridge?—I mean about his strange notions?”

“Yes,” answered Edgar, hotly, “I know the man well enough! rather too well! He’s a narrow-minded, meddling, canting hypocrite; and, mark my words, Mrs. Magnum, he’ll spoil the town and neighbourhood too!”

In saying which, Edgar Turrett did an excellent man great injustice, and showed, moreover, how narrow-minded he was himself. For the Rev. Spencer Reeve was not a hypocrite, and he didn’t cant, and he never meddled impertinently with other people’s affairs; and instead of being narrow-minded (in the ordinary acceptation of that term), he was a learned man, and an en-

lightened thinker. He was an unselfish and a devout clergyman, bent upon doing his duty to the very best of his great abilities; and being such, he was too grand a character to be rightly understood by Mr. Edgar Turrett.

"Dear Edgar," murmured Carry softly, "don't speak so strongly. Please don't, dear."

"And why shouldn't I, Carry?" inquired Edgar, not at all pleased at this mild protest against his vehemence.

"He's a clergyman, dear," answered Carry, with a brightening colour;—for it was the first time that she had presumed to reprove her lover. But it was the girl's belief that all preachers of the gospel (whether they were humble ministers like Mr. Bicker, or grand Bishops, or rich rectors of Merton-Piggott) ought to be spoken of with respect; and such being her opinion, she had the courage to tell him so.

"Well, well," answered Edgar, laughing, "I'll be a good boy, Carry. So let's leave the rector's cranks alone, and go to the refreshment-room for a glass of negus."

And Carry smiled with genuine happiness at the good humour with which her reproof had been accepted.

The next day, conversation at the Gray Street dinner table turning on the Rector and his disapproval of dancing, John Bromhead asked his child,

"What does Edgar say about Mr. Reeve?"

"He does not like him," was the brief answer.

"I am sorry to hear you say so, my dear," observed Martha, gravely,—with a sigh.

As the words and the sigh passed from Martha's lips, a cloud fell upon Carry's brow—for in the distance she

saw a tiny speck, and a presentiment seized her that the tiny speck would grow into a great cloud, and that the great cloud would dissolve itself in a rain of troubles and sorrows,—troubles and sorrows which she would have to 'live down.'

CHAPTER III.

A FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

IF Lady Farrell and Mrs. Magnum had reason to be dissatisfied with the assize ball, the less exalted caterers of amusement for the public had even better grounds for grumbling at the Fair. Complaints were heard on all sides. At no Merton-Piggott fair within the memory of man had so little business been done. The sheep-farmers and cattle-dealers had the least cause for complaint, but they shook their heads gloomily. The London tradesmen declared it was the last time they would attend the grand annual market, and intimated that if the gentry of the 'light lands' wished to purchase silks and satins, glass and furniture, jewellery and ornaments of them, they must come to London to do so. The races had never been so badly attended. The booth-keepers said they should be clean ruined. The fair, indeed, dragged out a languid life for six weeks—that is, till the end of September; but it never again lasted so long. In 1821 a month covered its duration; in 1822 it dropped down to a fortnight;

and from that date it steadily dwindled down to a mere cattle fair, and a gingerbread and lollipop festival for children, maid-servants, and quite humble folk.

No one was more hurt in pocket and spirits by the poverty of the fair, and the collapse of old-world society of the 'light lands' than Mr. Shakespeare Wylie, manager of the dramatic corps, long known throughout the country as 'Wylie's Company.' For a quarter of a century Mr. Shakespeare Wylie had been accustomed to visit Merton-Piggott annually, with his waggons of theatrical upholstery, and his staff of actors and actresses, staying two months in the place, and then leaving it—not for want of overflowing houses, but because he was pledged to visit other towns in the 'light land circuit.' An urbane, simple-hearted, consequential little man, Mr. Wylie had contrived to win the good opinion of all classes. 'The quality' were wont to treat him as an equal, shaking hands with him in public, and inviting him to their dinner parties; and very delighted the worthy manager was with the attentions showered upon him by the gentry, who (though they laughed with good humour at his eccentricities and affectations when his back was turned) cherished for him much genuine respect,—and gratitude for the zeal he displayed in contributing to their amusement. Bitter was the little man's chagrin, when in the autumn of 1820 he found himself night after night impersonating Hamlet or Othello to houses—crowded, indeed, in the pit and gallery, but almost empty in the boxes and dress circle. It was not merely loss of money (though that was a serious consideration) that he lamented, it was the loss of prestige that cut him to the heart.

According to custom he called at the rectory to solicit the honour of the rector's bespeak ! It is needless to say that the clergyman who disapproved of dancing opened his eyes in mute astonishment at the request. With a flush of wounded pride in his hollow face, with a kindling eye, and with a quivering lip, Mr. Shakespeare Wylie explained that " Archdeacon Lovegrove had always paid his theatre the compliment of a bespeak." Whereunto Mr. Reeve, without intending to give needless pain, replied, " that he could not be bound to follow his predecessor's example ; that it was his belief strolling players tended to demoralize the lower orders of the community ; and that, therefore, he felt it his duty to set his countenance against the Merton-Piggott theatre." To this the manager bowed his stateliest Hamlet bow, and was backing from the hearthrug to the door of the rector's library, when Mr. Reeve in pure benevolence added, " But, sir, if you or any of your company should be in difficulty from want of funds, I shall be very happy to present you with ten guineas to help you on your way to another town." " Sir, don't add insult to heartlessness ; I am a tragedian, not a beggar !" exclaimed the manager with no small amount of dignity, as he turned on his heel, and quitted the rectory without another word.

Nor was this the only slight which the unfortunate actor had to wince under. The High Sheriff gave him a bespeak, permitting the fact to be announced in the hand-bills, but when the evening of the bespeak came the Sheriff and his family were only represented by their servants, who, in a full blaze of laced livery, occupied the box assigned to—the patron. The rector's unintentional insult was offered in private, where there were no witnesses ; but all the ' light lands ' heard of the

Sheriff's unfeeling conduct. No wonder that the actor could not do his best; and that his auditors left the theatre saying, "Poor old fellow, he's not the man he was. He has lost his voice, and nerve, and command of feature!"

Too proud to communicate his woes to vulgar curiosity, the actor paced up and down the streets of Merton-Piggott (habited in black nether garments, short blue riding cloak, and tasselled skull-cap of black velvet), nursing his wrath, and muttering to himself about the "arrows of outrageous fortune, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes," when at the corner of Abbey Place (then full of stalls, and raree-shows, and sight-seekers) he found himself seized by a hearty hand, and greeted by a no less cordial voice.

"Ah, old friend!" exclaimed the voice, "how comes this? You've been a week in Merton-Piggott, and haven't dropped in to see me! What does it mean?"

"My dear physician, my dear chief of that divine art of healing whose praises poets have sung from remotest antiquity!" answered the manager, with the habitual extravagance of diction which was one of his laughable peculiarities. "I have not dared to call on you! I called on your new rector, and his reception made my proud heart vow I would not cross another threshold in this town,—save those of my theatre, and my temporary habitation in Glynn Street."

"For shame, Wylie," answered Dr. Magnum, "the frown of a stranger ought not to affect you in that way."

"Ah, but, my dear doctor," answered the tragedian, with tears springing to his eyes, "you don't know all;

—and I couldn't tell you. The old actor is heart-broken."

"I'll cure it," answered the physician heartily. "Come, my dear old friend, and dine with me at two o'clock to-day. I'll dine early, so that a bottle of old wine wont incapacitate you for your professional duties. We shall be quite alone, for Fanny is staying at Farrell Park for a few days."

"Shame on an old man," cried the actor, "who has not sooner inquired for that fair and exemplary lady who throws lustre and warmth over your hearth, my dear sir! From the profoundest abysses of my not unloyal heart, I hope that God still grants her health."

Having given a satisfactory report of the fair and exemplary lady's health, Dr. Magnum made the manager accept the invitation to dinner, and then inquired, "And how is Miss Christina Morris? Is she well? I see by the bills, she is with you."

"My niece," answered the manager, "is right well, and more beautiful than ever. When she hears you have condescended to remember her with courteous inquiries, her heart will be glad."

"Pray," rejoined the doctor, "present my compliments to her, and say that Fanny will call upon her immediately she returns from Farrell Park. And now, Wylie, I must run off to my town patients. Mind, two o'clock sharp,—cutlets and port."

Under the influence of Dr. Magnum's port, the manager disburthened his full soul of all its sorrow, telling the story of his reception at the rectory.

"The sting of the barbed arrow, my friend," said the actor, "is that reflection convinces me that, instead of intending to insult me, Mr. Reeve meant to move me by his Christian generosity. He said to himself, 'I

will not trample on that poor rascal, whose ape-like ingenuity is employed in feigning heroic passions, so that he may procure a meal of herbs ! I will be benevolent to him !” Ah, doctor, how low must I and my art have fallen, if scholars of profound learning and proud position thus entreat me with disdainful mercy. To think that I, who have dined at the table of his Grace of Dovercourt, and been pledged as friend by Bishop Lovegrove, should be taken for a beggar in the very library, in which I have entertained patrician auditors with my Shakespearian readings,—in the very house where I have quaffed the grape of Southern France ! My dear doctor, I value your sympathy as the miser values his gold and precious stones ; but I implore you, tell no one of my humiliation, not even your fascinating and amiable lady. To you I have told all, even as I told it with scalding tears of indignation to my niece Christina.”

What kind words could accomplish for the manager’s comfort, Dr. Magnum’s sympathy achieved. But the worthy doctor did more than utter smooth sentences ;—he exerted himself to his utmost to keep up the prestige of the theatre. He called on all the ‘old quality’ who were in the neighbourhood, and urged them to rally round Mr. Wylie, and cheer up the honest fellow (now nearer seventy than sixty years of age) under the bitter sense of outrage and neglect which so deeply perturbed him. He even called at the rectory on the subject, and represented to Mr. Reeve how respectable a man Mr. Wylie was,—and how, instead of demoralizing the humbler people of the ‘light lands,’ he had for a quarter of a century done much to create and foster amongst all classes a taste for intellectual pursuits.

“My dear sir,” said the physician warmly, “a more

humane, sensitive, and devout Christian than that poor strolling manager is not to be found in the whole country! He looks after the physical comforts and moral welfare of every member of his troop with parental solicitude; and his corps consists of as thoroughly respectable men and women as can be found in Merton-Piggott. Of course, I am aware you never contemplated hurting the poor man's feelings,—but you did; and I very much regret it. Sir, in his day that old man has done good service,—as a teacher and moral guide to ignorant multitudes. From the stages of his theatres, throughout this part of England, he has roused in the breasts of poor untaught men and women the noblest emotions of which human nature is capable. Indeed, my dear sir, you must reconsider your decision,—and see if you can't give my old friend Wylie a bespeak."

To which the rector answered, "My dear doctor, I am well aware of all that can be said, and is daily advanced, in behalf of 'the stage' by its upholders, and I admit that much of it contains sound common sense and truth. But I cannot swerve from the course I have taken, for I have entered upon it from a sense of duty. I am, however, greatly concerned at finding how acutely I have pained an honest and well-disposed man. I can assure you, my dear Dr. Magnum, this occurrence has filled me with regret and humiliation,—which I trust may be made serviceable to my heart. No, doctor, I cannot render your friend the 'amende honorable' by a sacrifice of what I believe to be my duty; but I shall forthwith call upon him, and entreat him (as he is the excellent man I now from your representations know him to be) to pardon me for thoughtlessly grieving him. This distressing occurrence has been a lesson to me,

that while I am the champion of a new system in this town and neighbourhood I must endeavour to take a charitable view of those who belong to the old."

Whereupon the physician left the rectory, saying to himself, "That man is thoroughly in earnest, and he is a good man. Before he has been three years in this town, he'll have wrought a revolution in it. May it be for the better! If the change be for the worse, it will not the less have been brought about by a sincere Christian."

The rector was as good as his word. Calling at the manager's lodgings, he made an earnest declaration of his deep regret for what had occurred,—and he made it, moreover, with such tact and delicacy, that Mr. Wylie took his hand and said, "My dear sir, do not humiliate a humble man like myself with further words. 'England expects every man to do his duty,' as our immortal hero of the sea observed;—since duty orders you to keep out of my theatre, Heaven forbid that for the sake of my interests I should ask you to disobey her voice! Duty orders me, so long as I have health and strength left, to be as good an actor and strolling manager as possible,—and like you I will execute her mandate. And, my dear sir, permit me to assure you that the mode of your address to me on the present occasion has taught me one part of a Christian's duty—how to lay aside all considerations of pride and ask pardon for giving offence. The lesson, Mr. Reeve, will not be thrown away on the poor actor!"

When Edgar Turrett heard of the rector's 'disapproval of the stage,' the rough side of his nature displayed itself yet more roughly than it had done a few days before, when the Reverend Spencer Reeve had ex-

pressed his 'disapproval of dancing.' The terms in which the young man expressed his detestation of the 'canting hypocrite' (as he persisted in calling the rector) made Carry tremble in her minute shoes, and Martha turn pale with astonishment, and John Bromhead say, "Easy, easy, Edgar,—come my young friend, don't be so violent. You must let every man act according to his conscience."

"Conscience!" cried Edgar. "Don't talk to me about that man's conscience. Conscience is the word now used everywhere to dress up acts of impertinent interference, so that they may be tolerated by the world."

"Well," observed the merchant, wishing to pacify his daughter's lover, "Mr. Wylie tells everyone that the rector has called upon him, and offered him the most handsome and delicate apologies for his unintended insult. And you mayn't be so severe against people who disapprove of actors; for (though as a young man I used to take great interest in the drama) we dissenters entertain conscientious scruples against patronizing the play-house."

"Of course, he apologised!" returned Edgar hotly, paying no attention to the latter portion of John Bromhead's speech. "He found out he had made a prodigious mistake; and having set the town against himself, he hadn't the courage to persist in his conscientious course. It isn't the first time I've known a man sneak out of a scrape—with an apology."

"Well," said John Bromhead, charitably, "that's better than lying in a nasty muddy scrape, out of sheer obstinacy."

"True,—but creeping out of a scrape doesn't brush mud off soiled clothes. So I'll still say, the rector

has a muddy coat on his back. But I'll fight him ! He doesn't approve horse-racing (there's nothing he does approve of except prayers and weak tea). But just let us wait another year ; and I'll have a horse (that complies with the conditions of the hurdle-race), and I'll enter him, and ride him myself at the Merton-Piggott races, and show the rector that he isn't going to have it all his own way. I'll fight him !"

Nor was this an idle threat.

Edgar forthwith began to take measures for carrying out his resolution of fighting the rector,—*i. e.* of setting himself in open and defiant opposition to a great social change, dependent on laws as mighty and universal as those which govern the tides of ocean. In fighting the rector, he was about to wage war with the power of which Mr. Reeve was only an exponent,—the power that embraces all those influences by which great nations are altered during periods of rapid social development. A more mad and luckless war cannot be waged than that which over-confident and dogmatic young men too often carry on against great principles. It was on such mad war that Edgar entered when he began to fight the rector. He might as well have kept quiet at Castle Hollow, building out the sea-waves with walls of sand.

Of course he strenuously aided and abetted Dr. and Mrs. Magnum in their endeavours to fill the theatre. Duringtheremainderof fair-timehe treated the partridges with unprecedented neglect, and came over to Merton-Piggott nearly every other day ; and he never visited the town without dropping in upon the old actor, or exchanging a few words with the manager's niece, Miss Christina Morris. He entertained Mr. Wylie, at the Melford Arms, with dinners and wine of the best ; and

when Lady Farrell extended her patronage to Mr. Shakespeare Wylie, and bespoke a play, Edgar, in his enthusiasm to support the drama, took one of the stage-boxes, and induced his aunt to come over from Castle Hollow, and sit in it for three hours.

Not content with asking her friends to attend the theatre, Fanny Magnum induced half a hundred of them to meet her in her husband's library, and be entertained with Shakespearian reading by Miss Christina Morris. A tall, elegant woman, with some beauty of countenance, and a simple, lady-like demeanour, the manager's niece had for years past enjoyed much flattering attention from the Merton-Piggott 'quality.' Mrs. Lovegrove used to invite her to evening parties at the rectory, and the Duchess of Dovercourt had presented her with a bracelet. The ladies took romantic interest in her, wondering why she had not married, instead of living single to thirty years of age; for she was comely, clever, accomplished, and had what her patronesses were pleased to term 'an unimpeachable reputation.' Besides being the *prima donna*, first *danseuse*, and first actress of her uncle's troop, she was a literary celebrity, having published (under the *nom de plume* of 'Virginia') a volume of poems entitled 'The Wayside Lyrics of a Bleeding Foot,' and several novels, of which 'The Haunted Barn, or the Squire's Revenge,' eight vols., and 'The Mutations of a Genteel Household,' three vols., were the most generally esteemed. The sums paid to the authoress for these works were trifling; but they brought her something wherewith to keep up her glittering stage costumes, and the efforts ('heart-throws' Christina called them) which produced their most pathetic passages gave her a liberal amount of pleasurable weeping. And Virginia's works still live;

at least they may be found in the British Museum, and be bought (for a few pence) at book-stalls, together with the works of 'Virginia's' superiors in literary art—the Misses Porters, and Mistress Ann Radcliffe.

Amongst the fifty persons who listened to Miss Christina's 'readings' in the library of Bassingbourne House, were John Bromhead, Caroline, Edgar, and Miss Turrett (who since her nephew's engagement had availed herself of every opportunity to meet Carry Bromhead). On the termination of the readings, the audience had supper, and finished the evening gaily—as Fanny Magnum's guests were wont to do. Christina was 'off duty,' as far as the theatre was concerned, for the occasion; and very much she enjoyed the applause awarded to her artistic skill, and the amiable flattery bestowed on her afterwards, while she and Fanny Magnum alternately sang ballads to the great delectation of the company.

"Edgar," said Dr. Magnum, in an undertone, drawing the young man aside after supper, "just watch Christina's face for a minute, and then I'll show you her portrait."

"Where is it?"

"Look at her first."

Whereupon Edgar turned his eyes in the direction of the actress, who was at the other end of the room, receiving homage as the lioness of the evening.

Dr. Magnum was known as a collector of rare books, coins, and curious engravings. And amongst his folios of the latter were several series of portraits of celebrated persons,—statesmen, philanthropists, soldiers, men of science, writers, orators, criminals, and remarkable women. When he spoke to Edgar, he held in his hands his folio of portraits of remarkable women, to

which he had recently made some interesting additions ; and while Edgar's eyes were still fixed on Christina, he put before him a portrait, saying—

“ Now, my friend, look.”

The engraving thus offered to observation was a likeness of Charlotte Corday, thus described on the bottom margin, “ P. M. Alix, Sculpt. Marie-Anne Charlotte Corday. Née à St. Saturnin les Vignaux, âgée de 25 ans moins 3 mois. Decapitée le 17 Juillet, 1793, pour avoir assassiné Marat la 13 du même mois. A Paris, chez Drouhin, Editeur and Propriétaire des Antiquités Nationales, Rue Christine, No. 2. Imprimé chez lui par Bechet. Le Portrait de Marat paroîtra dans la meme grandeur d'ici à deux mois.”

“ Come,” said the doctor, “ what think you ?”

“ That there is a likeness,” answered Edgar ; “ not a strong one, but still a perceptible similarity.”

“ Pshaw ! ” answered the physician, pettishly, returning the picture to the folio, it is a remarkable likeness, a most astonishing likeness.”

“ No,” replied the other, quietly, “ not so much as that.”

Nothing more passed at the time, and Edgar dismissed the subject from his mind, as one of those mere fancies in which the doctor was wont to indulge. But the next morning, as he walked round the Castle Hollow garden, with his grandfather leaning of his arm, amongst other gossip with which he entertained the veteran, he mentioned the circumstance of the supposed likeness between Christina Morris and Charlotte Corday.

“ Indeed ! ” said the squire, evidently interested.

“ And why ‘ indeed ’ ? ” inquired Edgar.

The Squire seated himself on a bench to which his grandson had conducted him, and then said—

“The fact you mention recalls to my mind a curious genealogical discovery made by my dear brother Gervase, who had a great taste for grubbing into the dark corners of the past. He made out to his own satisfaction that the great smuggler, Captain Damont (who used to command a perfect fleet of smuggling vessels along this coast, before you were born), was a cousin of Charlotte Corday’s. It was in this wise. Amongst the many French refugees who, on the revocation of the edict of Nantes, settled at Sedgehassock, and founded the worsted manufactures of that city, were two brothers of the noble family of Corday D’Armans. Their children, on being born in Sedgehassock, were registered as bearing the name of Darman—the family name of Corday being dropped, as well as the final letter of the titular name. In the next generation ‘Darman’ became Darmant, and thence it was altered to Damont. Poor Gervase died a few months after the executions of Charlotte Corday at Paris, and of the smuggler, Damont, at Sedgehassock ; but I remember well how in that year of 1793, while English people were all talking about Charlotte Corday, poor Gervase, in his last illness, found a brief pleasure in telling me how he had in former years traced out the pedigree of the famous smuggler, and possessed the proofs of relationship between him and the more celebrated and justly admired Charlotte. So, you see, there is Corday blood running through the ‘light lands.’ Possibly Miss Christina has some of it in her veins.”

“I shall tell this to Dr. Magnum ; he’ll give me a pinch of snuff for the story,” said Edgar, laughing.

The day came when he thought of his grandsire’s words, without any inclination to smile at them.

But an occurrence of much more importance to Christina than a supposed discovery of a likeness between her and Charlotte Corday was about to make her an object of lively interest to the inhabitants of Merton-Piggott.

In the third week of September Christina had her 'benefit' at the theatre, just three nights after her Shakespearian Readings at Bassingbourne House. In her honour the house was well attended. Fanny Magnum was in the dress circle with a strong party of ladies; and Aunt Adelaide, together with Carry and Edgar, occupied the same stage-box in which she had appeared on the night of Lady Farrell's 'bespeak.' Carry had never before been in a theatre; John Bromhead having until that evening objected to her being a spectator of that which 'the persuasion' held in even greater abhorrence than dancing. To her unsophisticated eyes the scenic effects were marvellous; and during the performance, which consisted of *Hamlet*—Mr. Shakespeare Wylie acting the part of 'The Prince of Denmark,' and Christina impersonating 'Ophelia;' and, for an after-piece, *The Ogre Castle*,—Christina playing 'Gertrude the Fair,' and her uncle doing duty as the 'Ogre Baron,'—Carry was an approving spectator and auditor, until a distressing mishap terminated the entertainment.

The Ogre Castle was one of those sensation dramas in which the unrefined and untutored public of fifty years since delighted. At the close of the last and the beginning of the present century there was a great rage for sensation dramas, Mr. Matthew Gregory (*alias* Monk) Lewis, whose genius for the horrible was satirized by Lord Byron and Mr. Horace Smith, doing his best to gratify the public palate. In 1803 the "Monk's"

famous monodrama, *The Captive*, failed from its very excellence; because the house, instead of weeping with pity, yelled with hysteric anguish. "The only chance," wrote the author to his mother, "was whether pity would make the audience weep; but, instead of that, a terror threw them into fits; and, of course, there was an end to my monodrama." *The Ogre Castle* just fell short of this too great perfection. It was intensely fearful, but it never altogether extinguished hope; the spectators were just able to live through it. Carry, who, sitting beside Adelaide Turrett, had already been greatly moved by Shakespeare's sublime tragedy, was dissolved to tears by the sufferings inflicted on virtuous maidens and society at large by the diabolical machinations of the 'Ogre Baron.' During the concluding scene of the 'Witch Cave,' she had so entirely given herself up captive to scenic illusion, that her mind had ceased to associate the wicked Ogre with the harmless and verbose old gentleman who had taken wine with her at Dr. Magnum's supper-table, three evenings before. 'Leonora,' to poor Carry's feeling heart, was really and truly being boiled to death in the hideous caldron that stood in the centre of the Witch-Cave, emitting blue flames and sulphuric odours; when, hark! a rumbling of thunder!—a flash of forked lightning athwart the entrance to the Witch-Cave!—the mighty boom of cannon!—and, lo! to the softest notes of most pathetic violins, "Gertrude the Fair" (appropriately habited and adorned with short white muslin dress, gauze wings, pink stockings, golden crown, and gleaming wand) flew upon the scene! On her appearance the 'Ogre Baron' shrieked with torture, his witches joining in chorus, whilst flames rose mountains high from the big caldron, and from all

parts of the cave. Whilst the glare was at its fiercest and the noise at its highest, 'Gertrude the Fair' sped round the subterraneous prison, and turned sharp to the front of the house, to embrace the resuscitated 'Leonora,' whom she expected to see standing before her, when

A scream of dismay went up from every seat of the little theatre!

"She's on fire!" "Put it out!" were heard over a Babel of vociferations.

In another instant Edgar Turrett had leaped from his box on to the stage, and caught Christina Morris in his arms, as, panic-struck, she was rushing round the stage, in flames. The actress's dress had caught fire, and 'the house' had 'a sensation'—not bargained for.

Never had that little theatre (though it had in its time beheld strange scenes) witnessed such a commotion as followed.

A cry was raised that the theatre was on fire, and there was a rush to the one small passage that was the only means of egress from the house. Fortunately, Dr. Magnum had anticipated the alarm, and having sprung to the strong inner door he had closed it, and drawn the bolt across it, before a single person had contrived to get into the passage.

The panic did not last two minutes. Turning to look behind, the terrified people saw that the house was *not* on fire, and heard Edgar cry out from the stage that there was no danger, that the flames which had threatened Christina with the most hideous of deaths were extinguished, and that the actress had suffered only slight injury. Whereupon there was a sudden revulsion of feeling, and the crowd,

who a minute before had been thinking each one for himself, gave utterance to a series of deafening cheers for him who, in the moment of peril, careless of his own risk, had rescued Christina Morris from imminent death.

Of all this painful scene of danger, alarm, confusion, and uproar, Carry Bromhead was a mute spectator. Very pale and frightened she was; but she uttered neither cry nor exclamation, from the moment when Edgar sprung from her side to rescue Christina, till the flames were extinguished, and it was announced that the disaster and the peril were confined to the person of the actress. Then Carry folded her hands together, and murmured thanks to God; and three seconds afterwards, just as the thunders of applause were rising from the pit, the foolish, timorous child fainted away in Aunt Adelaide's arms.

The difficulty now was to induce 'the house' to disperse. The crowd, who shortly before had been animated with one strong desire to quit the theatre, now remained, lingering in their places, waiting for fresh intelligence and more excitement. It was not till the manager had caused the candles to be extinguished that his guests came to the conclusion that it would be best to go home, and talk about the accident over their suppers.

One of the last persons to leave the theatre was Carry Bromhead, who, while the assembly was slowly breaking up and dispersing, had been restored to consciousness by the care of Adelaide Turrett and the skill of Dr. Magnum, who had conveyed the inanimate girl into the ladies' cloak-room as soon as she became senseless.

The St. Mary's clock had struck the hour of mid-

night ere Aunt Adelaide's coach drew up before John Bromhead's house in Gray Street, and Carry was lifted from it by Dr. Magnum, and led to her father's arms.

"Oh, papa, papa," exclaimed the poor girl, falling into her father's embrace, "it has been so terrible—so very terrible! I'll never go to a theatre again!"

And Carry kept this resolution for many a year.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTINA AND CARRY.

THE next morning Merton-Piggott learnt the extent of the injuries inflicted on Christina Morris.

Examination ascertained that she had been scorched and superficially burnt on the left side of her body, and that her left arm—in the interior side, from the wrist to the superior part of the limb—was very seriously burnt. Dr. Magnum and Mr. Congreve (the principal surgeon of the town) concurred in the opinion that, even should the case take the most favourable course, the arm could not be healed without such serious contraction of the muscles, and such permanent stiffness of the elbow joint, as would preclude the actress from future discharge of her professional duties. An actress with her left arm motionless, and rigidly fixed by her side, would clearly be unable to impersonate the principal female characters of the British Drama; and hitherto, Christina (as the reader knows) had been the first *danseuse*, as well as the chief actress, in her uncle's troop.

For such a sufferer, of course, the sympathy of Merton-

Piggott was boundless. All day long callers knocked at the door of the manager's lodgings in Glynn Street, inquiring for Miss Christina's health, and leaving presents of kitchen delicacies. The rector called daily to make inquiries, and all the principal ladies of the town were constant visitors to the actress's bedside. "Poor thing!" they said, with busy benevolence, "what will she be able to do in life? what can we do to help her? She is a pianist, but a pianist with an utterly useless left arm can't live by giving music lessons any more than she can be an actress. Perhaps she'll still be able to write her books, but an author's is a poor trade, and she says the booksellers never paid her much for her novels, though no one can say that the 'Haunted Barn' isn't as melting a tale as need be. Of course she can still give her Shakespearian Readings, but people won't be for ever paying their half-crowns for the mere words of plays, without the lights, and the dances, and the murdering, and all that sort of thing! Poor dear young woman, she has a hard time of it to look forward to; for though she's as honest, and proud, and right-minded as any regular lady, she's as poor as a church-mouse, and her uncle (if people are going to leave off patronizing the provincial stage) will find it hard work to make two ends meet. What can he do for her?"

Fanny Magnum suggested that they should raise a subscription at the Assembly Rooms, and procure funds to furnish a small house, wherein to set Miss Morris up as a school-mistress. Another girls' school was wanted in Merton-Piggott, and what more suitable person to preside over such an establishment could be found than Christina, who, besides being an author, a musician, and a singer, had "such an unimpeachable character." At this present date parents would object to place their

girls under the tuition of a lady whose antecedents were such as Christina's. But fifty years since the British public regarded life differently than they do now-a-days. Possibly they esteemed the teacher's vocation less highly ; most unquestionably they set greater value on the dramatic profession. It was therefore a common thing for retired actresses to take to school-keeping ; and when Mrs. Magnum made her benevolent proposal in behalf of her humble friend, no one dreamt of suggesting that, as ex-dancer and singer on the boards of country-town theatres, Christina was disqualified for the office of guarding and training the intellectual and moral faculties of little girls. On the contrary, the plan was met by an universal exclamation,—“It would be a good thing for Christina, and a *capital* thing for the town !”

Christina's accident took place in the third week of September, and, before the end of that month, Mr. Shakespeare Wylie was bound by professional honour to be present with his troop at King's Heath, in time for the October meetings, from which place of fashionable resort it was his custom to move on to Easthaven for five or six weeks in November and December, getting back by Christmas-day to his head-quarters in the cathedral town of Sedgehassock, where his practice was to remain for three months, that is to say, until the time came for him to ‘begin circuit’ once again with the tranquil towns of Washpuddle and Great Massiter. The manager consequently was unable to stay with his niece until time should put it beyond doubt how far her injuries would incapacitate her for the exercise of her profession. Having therefore secured the services of a London *artiste* (to act as Christina's substitute in ‘the company’), Mr. Wylie, together with his waggons and theatrical appurtenances, quitted

Merton-Piggott, leaving his niece in Glynn Street, surrounded by her sympathetic patronesses.

But before journeying to King's Heath, the punctilious little tragedian said farewell to his friends in terms of grateful magniloquence. "My dear physician," he exclaimed, wringing Doctor Magnum warmly by the hand, "consummate physician of the diseased mind, even more than of the suffering body,—your benevolent tenderness to my poor niece, and your liberal hospitality to her uncle, have touched the depths of this faithful heart, and more than compensated me for the misery I endured upon my entrance, six weeks since, into this lovely town. My sojourn has been one of disasters, but also of memorable joys. And the great calamity which has befallen me in Christina's accident is attended with consolations. I leave her, to recover health, under your protection;—and I am comforted by reflecting that her sufferings are not to be attributed to the sublime genius of William Shakespeare, but to that detestable 'sensation drama'—which is perverting the taste of the simple, and lowering my profession in the estimation of the wise."

To Edgar Turrett the manager was not less impressive with parting words. "Young gentleman," said the manager, "rescuer of my dear niece from the jaws of death, and discerning patron of the dramatic art, that has fallen upon evil days, and has to contend with evil men,—and, alas me! with good men also,—if an old actor's blessing had a charm whereby it could hedge out trouble from your path, he would have the presumption to give it you. But you stand in little need of my good wishes. In sunny dignity, with a charming bride, your days will flow on peacefully in ancestral halls! Honour surrounds you! Men will

not marvel and blame your grandfather (fine old gentleman that he is!) for suffering you to spend your

‘youth at home ;
While other men, of slender reputation,
Put forth their sons to seek preferment out :
Some to the wars, to try their fortune there ;
Some to discover islands far away ;
Some to the studious universities.’

You, sir, have already won bright honours at the studious university, and in your own person represent that rare combination of learning and wealth which has for generations distinguished your house amongst the aristocracy of the ‘light lands.’ Mr. Edgar, pardon my loquacity. Old age may well be garrulous to the gentle, for it cannot get a moment’s hearing from the churlish.”

It was not till the manager and his ‘corps’ had taken their departure, that the suggestion to set up Christina as a schoolmistress emanated from Mrs. Magnum, and met with so much encouragement from that benevolent lady’s intimate friends, that she determined to sound the actress as to her plans for the future, and ascertain if the proposed scheme would be acceptable to her. Deeply was the grateful heart of the poor actress moved when she was informed of the manner in which the sympathy of her patronesses proposed to express itself. In her humble career, the attractive woman had met more flatterers than friends, and the simple ardour with which she declared her thanks to the ladies who wished to be her enduring benefactors, satisfied them that their humane wishes had not been misdirected. But Christina would not definitely accept the offer until she had taken time

for reflection, and consulted with her uncle and other friends. She would keep quiet a few weeks, while nature and Dr Magnum's art did their best to restore her injured arm; and then, if she should be unable to resume her original profession, she would decide whether she would profit by the generous offer.

Perhaps some of her protectors wondered who might be the 'other friends' whose approval Christina was anxious to obtain, before entering on a new way of life; but no one was surprised that she should still cherish a hope of returning to the stage,—although both her physician and surgeon adhered to their first opinion that her arm would henceforth be an incumbrance rather than an assistance to her. For the ladies of Merton-Piggott, old-world in many of their views, were in no respect more so than in the romantic colouring with which they surrounded 'a player's' existence. Even Carry, who, as a latitudinarian member of the 'persuasion,' had been taught to regard the 'play-house' as a worldly and hurtful institution, and the 'player's' art as being somehow or other (of course Carry never examined particularly into the how) an alliance with the Evil One, was not altogether free from the delusion that 'theatrical life' possessed the charms of constant novelty and pleasurable excitement, and was protected from those dull cares which wore away the spirits of many ordinary mortals,—such, for instance, as her delicate and sad-voiced mother. In her childhood, when she had observed 'the actors' pacing up and down the paths of the Abbey garden, and muttering to themselves scraps of 'their parts,' she had often sighed to think that she could never share in their fascinating career of intellectual vagrancy; that she was

even debarred from witnessing their exploits, which created so much sensation amongst Mrs. Magnum's friends. And even now that she was a 'come-out' young lady,—with the privilege of the Assembly Rooms, and the dignity of 'being engaged,' to elevate her in the eyes of society,—she was so far from having out-grown such folly, that one afternoon, when she and Christina were sitting together, and talking with the ease and confidence of intimate friends, she observed, "I am not surprised, Miss Christina, that you do not like the thought of relinquishing your profession. If I were clever enough, and had to earn my own living, there's nothing I should so much like to be as an actress; that is to say" (added the young lady, blushing, as soon as the last words were out of her lips, for fear they should wound her companion), "if I could satisfy myself that it wouldn't be otherwise than quite right for me to be one."

"My dear child, don't talk such nonsense," bluntly responded Christina, throwing aside the more punctilious style in which she was accustomed to address the young lady, as Miss Caroline or Miss Bromhead. "You ought to be whipped and put in the corner for talking such nonsense."

"Why is it nonsense? It must be a very fascinating life, to move about from place to place, meeting cordial reception in each town you enter, and winning applause by the exercise of your genius."

"My dear," answered Christina, speaking gravely and with less sharpness, "yours is an imaginary picture, not the real one. You look out upon the actor's life from the eyes of your own happiness, and colour it with the reflection of joys—which are really your own."

Thank God you were not born into it, suckled in it, reared in it—as I was. You yourself blushed just now, for fear (like the generous, tender-hearted darling that you are!) your words might have pained me—as soon as you implied a doubt whether the life of a strolling actress was a fit one for a sensible woman, who would rather be happy in the next world than flattered in this. Don't doubt about the matter, Miss Caroline,—for it is possible that you may one day have it in your power to restrain some vain, silly girl (burning to display her genius!—her genius to the world that gapes on the other side of the foot-lights!) from taking a step which will be the first to her ruin. When generous ladies, like your friend Mrs. Magnum, treat me as an equal and dear friend, I feel that I am little better than an impostor for allowing them to lavish kindness on me, without saying outright—I am not fit company for your servants. The life is more dangerous, pernicious, loathsome to womanly delicacy (even to my delicacy—who began to play in children's parts when I was six years old) than your pure angel's mind can imagine. There, dear, now you have the *fact*. Don't leave off being kind to me, because I have shocked you by plain speaking."

"Dear Christina," cried Carry, throwing aside the formal 'Miss,' which she had hitherto prefixed to her friend's Christian name, "how is it possible for me so to repay your confidence?"

"I have never spoken this before to living woman," continued the actress, "never,—though many is the time I have been on the point of saying it to dear Mrs. Magnum. The thought has come to me often, when I have been speaking to her:—'Sooner or later that gentle, generous, warm-hearted lady will find out what

a strolling player's life really is, and then she'll cease to esteem me, because she thinks that I am enamoured of such a wretched existence, though I know so well its misery, and wretchedness, and unfeminine coarseness.' But I have never before had the courage to speak out. Sheer cowardice has held me from being frank ;—and aiding cowardice was a feeling that to speak so of the calling to which my dear uncle educated me would seem like a reproach on him. But I've told you the simple truth,—because I could not bear to have you one day say, 'That wretched actress, Christina Morris, whom I was once fool enough to like and admire, could endure the life of a strolling player, and not make an effort to quit it.' But, indeed, dear, I have made attempts to get out of it. Years back, when I published my poems, I hoped that they would introduce me to the publishers, so that I could get a living by my pen,—but they did me little good. Nobody bought them, except people who wished to give five shillings to the young actress. Then I took to writing novels, like so many other poor women, in the belief that my tales would sell just as well as any other woman's ;—but five-and-twenty pounds was the highest I ever got for a story, after spending on it two years of thought and writing. So I gave up novel-writing, and continued to go the circuit with my uncle ;—but the life has always been odious to me. Don't tell Mrs. Magnum or the other ladies what I say, dear ;—at least not just at present ; but lay my words away in your mind, and may they preserve you from ever thinking badly of me !"

Carry Bromhead was silent for a minute, and then said—"You wont then hesitate, Miss Christina, any longer about quitting the stage now ?"

"Oh," answered Christina quickly, "I have quite made up my mind not 'to act' any longer. I wouldn't go back to the company again, even if my arm were to be perfectly restored to me, which it cannot be. You are mistaken in supposing I wished to do so. When Mrs. Magnum first spoke to me about her plan for me to turn schoolmistress, I could not unfold to her all the private matters I should have to settle before I could profit by such an arrangement;—so I put her off as graciously as I could. Perhaps I was a little deceitful to her, but, dear Miss Caroline, such a life as I have led makes a woman deceitful and tricky. I daren't tell even those I most love all about myself."

"You've been tolerably communicative to me, Christina," returned Carry with a smile.

"It's strange," observed Christina, after a pause, "that I should speak so fully to you,—*you* who are so young and guileless, and moreover a member of 'the persuasion,' which is so very sincere and warm in its condemnation of actors. Perhaps I am led to do so, dear, by the fact that the brave, daring, gallant gentleman who saved my life—loves you as much as you love him. Didn't your heart throb with pride when you saw him—whilst inferior natures were anxious only for their own safety—leap upon the stage, and clasp my blazing dress in his arms?"

"Well," replied Carry, archly, "I wasn't jealous of you when I saw the embrace."

"My dear, don't smile about it, or treat such heroism with even the most innocent levity! Had he been less prompt, by twenty seconds, the fire would have enveloped me, and burnt me so terribly—that nothing could have saved me from death,—either instant death, or death after days of lingering torture; and here I am, only

slightly injured! Many a poor actress has been burnt to death! Oh, dear Miss Caroline, an actress's life is enough to batter all romance and fine sentiment out of her heart,—but if I have only gratitude and womanly goodness left in me, they dwell in greatest force in the desire I have to repay a fraction of the mighty debt I owe to my preserver! But how should such a one as I ever be able to render him any service—more valuable than the homage of the lips?"

"Your chances and opportunity for showing him your gratitude will be very slight," answered Carry, "if you wander away from us. You *must* stop in Merton-Piggott. Of course your uncle will let you. Who are 'the others' you have to consult on the subject? Come, Christina, tell me a little more about yourself; for I am a curious, prying, inquisitive child. Who are the others?"

"I can't tell you yet, Miss Bromhead," returned the actress, a blush coming to her worn and somewhat-jaded face, and an air of coldness and restraint replacing the frank earnestness which had hitherto characterized her manner. "Never mind for awhile who 'the others' are! It's enough that I am not altogether my own mistress, although I have been roughing it and leading an independent life for many years. In a few more days my friends will come to their decisions, and then I shall come to mine, and perhaps tell you all the reasons that have kept me shilly-shallying in this fashion."

"How very mysterious you are, and what a strange dark personage, with friends that one doesn't know about!" laughed Carry, not at all offended by the rebuff she had just experienced. "I shall begin to make up a history for you, and imagine you are married to some great lord, or heir to a title (such great people do marry

actresses sometimes), and that you are waiting patiently here, in your trouble, for him to make his appearance, and carry you away from Merton-Piggott in a magnificent coach drawn by six horses."

Raising herself on her sofa, Christina asked quickly, "Has anybody put such fancies into your head, Miss Bromhead; or are you only playing with your own imagination? Do tell me. Such a notion couldn't have originated with yourself. People are gossiping about me, and fabricating all sorts of ridiculous stories."

For half a minute Carry was quite alarmed at the effect of her idle words on Christina, whose colour had risen from its previous pink blush to one of crimson hue, whose eyes flashed—with excitement and surprise (not anger)—and who, regardless of Dr. Magnum's reiterated cautions that she should keep her injured arm in a state of rest, had suddenly put the lame limb out of its proper position.

"I wont speak another word to you, Miss Christina," exclaimed Carry, with spirit and firmness, "till you lay yourself down again, and I have put your arm in position. 'Highty-and-tighty, and nothing to pay for broken eggs!' (as my poor dear old nurse Becky used to say), you are as mad, contumacious, and thoroughly ungovernable an invalid as ever a little girl like your humble servant ever had to deal with. You are ten times as bad as papa when he has the gout! There, that will do. I am glad to see you in your old place again! Now let's look at the arm. Well, it isn't so much put wrong as I feared. The linen fold does not need touching, so there's no great harm done, Miss Gunpowder Wilful! But what is the matter now, dear? What are you shivering so for? and what are you crying

so for? Oh, dear Miss Christina, I haven't said anything to hurt you?"

"No, no, dear," said Christina, sobbing hysterically, "your words are as sweet and soothing as music. But do assure me, darling, if you can, that nobody in the town has been talking such stuff about me, as to say that I am secretly married."

"Indeed, Miss Morris," answered Carry warmly, "I haven't heard a whisper of any such gossip, and I don't believe such a notion has come into a single head, or passed from a single pair of lips in all Merton-Piggott, except those of the foolish mad-cap girl who is talking to you now."

"Then, dear," replied Christina, rapidly recovering her composure, "do promise me you won't breathe a syllable of what has happened between us this afternoon to anyone. Do promise me."

"I won't tell any one, dear," answered Carry, "except *some one*. I must tell him, for of course it would be wrong for me to have any secrets from him."

"Of course, dear," answered Christina with a smile, "lovers never count for anyone in promises of secrecy. Tell him what you like; my preserver won't say anything that is ill of me! Only don't let people gossip about me, if you can help it."

CHAPTER V.

MISS CHRISTINA CREATES ANOTHER SENSATION.

AFTER waiting with Christina till she had resumed her ordinary composure, Carry Bromhead returned to Gray Street to array herself in what she deemed the most tasteful and becoming of her several quiet at-home evening costumes, for 'some one' had promised to make his appearance at half-past four o'clock P.M., to walk with her for an hour in the tree-garden (that, built in by high walls, lay to the rear of John Bromhead's house), and to take tea with her and her papa and mamma, and possibly (ere he left her at night for his ride over the heaths to Castle Hollow) to kiss her, and whisper, "Three years and a half will soon slip away, Carry. When I went to Cambridge for the first time I was just about your age, and I thought my undergraduate career was such a wide sweep of life, that it would be absurd to look for the boundary on the other side. But it soon slipped away, Carry, very soon. And, in like manner, our three years and a half of undergraduate life will soon be done, and then we'll take

high honours in the 'schools of love,' where we've been studying so industriously."

Having completed her toilet, Carry put on her garden hat and threw over her shoulders a garment (known in Miss Matcham's days as 'a pelerine'), and tripping over the grass-plot of John Bromhead's tree-garden, went to its most secluded walk (already, alas, strewn with autumnal leaves), and there paced up and down.

"Poor Christina!" thought Carry, "then she has her miseries, which we happy rich people know nothing of! She spoke so pathetically of her attempts to win her way into a better life. Naturally she must be a very good woman to have so few faults,—if the life of the stage is so dangerous, and trying, and deteriorating! There's some sad mystery about it, I am sure. What can it be? I suppose it will transpire soon. Now, I partly understand how it is that, before her accident, I used to wonder at the sad, worn look of her face, even at her brightest moments. Well, I'll take double pains to be kind to her. I'll ask papa to do something for her; and I'll consult with Edgar about her. Anyhow, if Fanny Magnum's proposal for a subscription is carried out, poor Christina shall have all my next quarter's allowance!" Carry's 'this quarter's' allowance, was all spent, every penny of it. Her quarter's allowance was always dissipated by the end of the first three weeks of each quarter, and during the remaining weeks she passed her days in voluntary impecuniosity.

"No, no, papa," Carry would say, "I won't have any more money, I've spent quite as much as is good for me. Ten guineas a quarter is a prodigious sum to be squandered by a girl who has her dress and everything else found for her, and

lots of presents besides. I wont make ducks-and-drakes of any more money till next quarter."

"Squandered!" John Bromhead would reply, in his heart well-pleased with Carry's persistent abnegation of wealth (though he didn't value a guinea at so much as a brass farthing, where her enjoyment was concerned). "Squandered!—why, you little insane chicken, your money is never spent on yourself, but given away! When I give you ten guineas, it is only giving so much more in charity to poor people, who (Heaven knows!) want it badly enough."

Whereunto Carry would respond, "Then, distribute another five guineas amongst them yourself, papa. You know how to give away so much better than I do."

And in justice to the benevolent merchant, it must be stated that he always obeyed the child's injunction.

Carry Bromhead had scarce made the generous resolve to present Christina Morris with her next quarter's allowance, when a certain confident 'some one' (who had cleverly contrived to slip close up to her, under cover of the trees, without being observed by eye or ear) put his arm round her waist, and gave her a kiss—all in the flash of a moment, before the readiest tongue could have said, "Jack be nimble, Jack be quick."

"Now, sir," exclaimed the young lady, drawing herself away with a look of such terrible displeasure, that the intruder thought he might as well 'do it again,'—"to punish you for stealing one in that way, I wont give you so much as my hand to kiss for an entire week. And go down on your right knee instantly, and beg my forgiveness for what you've done."

"Fair nymph of the woody shade, I sue for pardon," said Edgar, falling upon his right knee, and doing penance for his rash act in the manner dictated.

"Sir Knight, even for thy misdeeds, I am powerless to frown upon thee ;—rise !" answered Carry in the highest style of fashionable romance.

Which was merciful of her.

But it was the part neither of mercy nor of maidenly reserve to extend a hand for the purpose of assisting the culprit to rise from his ignominious position. Yet she offered him that needless attention, and was rewarded for her reprehensible condescension by having that hand—emblem of pity and herald of forgiveness—seized and pressed to the lips of the impenitent sinner, who, for a similar misdeed, had just before been punished.

Then those two young people walked (as, doubtless, many young loving pairs before their time had done) up and down the narrow avenue, giving and receiving happiness by glance, and word, and touch,—and having recourse to all those fantastic, and graceful, and altogether laudable methods of expressing affection which flippant cynics sneer at as 'mere billing and cooing.'

"Edgar," said Carry, at the close of the sixth pacing up and down the quiet walk, "I have been sitting an hour to-day with Christina Morris. Her arm is healing ; but she isn't happy—poor woman ! I wonder what we can do for her ! You, who have preserved her life, must help me to render it happy."

"What has she been talking to you about to-day ?" inquired Edgar, who wished to know 'what was up,' before he pledged himself to a particular line of action.

"Well, dear, she has been speaking to me freely about

several things; and I feel for her with much pity. I am sure she's a good woman!"

"Doubtless!" returned the practical mind. "But how has she shown her goodness just now?"

"Well, dear Edgar," responded romantic sympathy, "there's some sad mystery about her. I can't help thinking she's secretly married to some one."

Whereupon Edgar laughed, long and boisterously,—just as *those* men will laugh at times when the sentimental aspects of life are put before them by inexperienced hands.

"So that's your sad mystery, is it, Carry?" inquired this particular man, who had lived to twenty-seven years of age without a single 'affair of the heart.' "Very sad, indeed! 'Pon my honour, Carry, I wish you and I had just such a sad mystery between us."

"Fie, Edgar!" said Carry. "I am quite ashamed of you! And if you don't behave properly, I'll take you into the drawing-room, and make you sit there till tea-time, with papa and mamma."

This fearful punishment being one that Carry could easily have inflicted, Edgar became grave, and entreated Carry to recount to him minutely all that had transpired between her and Christina.

"Will you promise not to tell anyone?"

"Yes; of course I do."

"But can you keep a promise of secrecy?"

"No, I can't."

"Don't be so tiresome, Edgar!" said Carry, laughing.

"You shouldn't have put the question," responded the tormentor. "I am a simple fellow, and must speak the truth."

"Well,—if you are so honest, I suppose I may trust you."

"I think you'd better."

"Then I *will* trust you. Only mind, Edgar,—remember, if you breathe a syllable of what I now tell you under strict confidence, I'll never,—never——"

"If," interposed Edgar, "you don't begin this very minute to tell me all that your little tongue is burning to tell me, I'll never—never—listen to a word of it."

"I declare, Edgar, you are worse than ever."

"Far worse, my dear. I was opinionated and dogmatic before you were so good as to assure me you loved me; but now I am nothing short of imperious."

Whereupon Carry gave him a full and particular account of her interview with Christina, concluding with "And I can't help thinking, Edgar, that my words disturbed her so, because she really *is* married."

To all which narrative and conclusion, Edgar responded by contracting his lips, and relieving his mind with a prolonged "Whew!"—an exclamation that is here given in an abbreviated form, for the sufficient reason that, if it were written out at full length, it would extend from the present page into the middle of the next chapter.

"Don't you think I'm right in my conjecture?"

"Um!" said Edgar. "I don't know that you are."

"Then you don't think she's married?"

"It may be marriage,—or a sadder mystery still!"

"Oh, don't say so, don't think so, Edgar," exclaimed Carry, suddenly turning pale, and beginning to tremble, as she was wont to do when much excited. "I wouldn't have told you a word, if I had suspected you would make so uncharitable—so cruel—so unworthy a supposition. I am sure Christina is a good woman."

"I am sure, from what you say," returned Edgar, "that she does her best to be one. Poor woman, I never meant to hint evil of her. No, no, Carry, darling, don't think it of me. It's a strange story if she's married, but a sad one, if she is married in such a manner that she dares not avow the fact openly."

"I was sure you couldn't be ungenerous!" exclaimed Carry, greatly relieved.

"Poor creature!—if she's in serious trouble I should like to help her."

"How I wish she could hear you say so!" exclaimed Carry, enthusiastically; and after a pause she added:—"Oh, she did look so beautiful, so handsome to-day, when my idle speech pricked her up. Do you know, sir, she put me in mind of you when you're excited. There was just the same terrible expression in her countenance as there is in yours when you're—you're——"

"When I am angry, and throwing out my ill-temper at that darling rector of yours?" interposed Edgar.

"Not a bit of it, sir. I don't like you when you are in your ferocious moods. They only make me tremble, and think that I have not power enough in me to tame you down into a peaceable member of society. I liked the look of you the other night though, sir, when you jumped away from me, and saved poor Christina's life. Your face wore the expression then, that was on her face to-day."

"Do you really think there is a likeness between me and Miss Morris?"

"Nothing in features—or almost nothing. I am only speaking of expression."

As the lovers received a summons to tea at this interesting point of their conversation, they dismissed the

subject from their minds, and hastened to the drawing-room, where John Bromhead was ready to receive them, and Martha Bromhead was already presiding over the tea equipage in her customary silence.

The next morning, Edgar, as he was leading his grandfather round the Hollow House garden, for his usual morning walk, said: "What think you, sir?—There's another likeness discovered for Miss Christina Morris! Carry thinks she resembles me. I don't know whether it follows that I bear a resemblance to Charlotte Corday, and to her kinsman—(that is to say, kinsman, if your genealogical facts are to be trusted) Damont the smuggler."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the Squire, irritably, "don't make such disagreeable jests, boy. The next thing you'll do by way of joke will be to make out that you are descended from some rascal who was hanged."

To this Edgar said nothing in reply; for he knew by experience that the dignity of the Turretts was a subject on which the Squire would not suffer any approach to levity of speech. In the 'light lands' old Squire Antony was reputed to be a very proud man; the seniors of 'the quality,' who could recall his brother Gervase and his father, often compared him with them, in respect of this characteristic. There are few conditions more likely to make a man exalt the dignity of his 'county family,' than a prolonged residence in London under circumstances that induce him to be continually thinking of its members with romantic affection. Seen from Fitzgerald Passage, the Hollow House was a much more imposing residence than it was when regarded from a nearer point of observation. "There is a London pride!" sang Tom Hood, in his ode to Mr. Rae Wilson.

But far more disdainful than the 'London pride' is the 'country pride' which has been transplanted to London soil.

Edgar therefore did not pursue the topic; but he marvelled why his grandfather had replied so testily; why, also, that same testy reply increased rather than allayed his evident perturbation.

Ere the day was over, Edgar had, however, forgotten for the present so trifling an occurrence; and by the close of the week he had much more important matters on which to expend his attention, in the races of the last 'October meeting,' which he went over to King's Heath to witness.

It was while he was amusing himself at King's Heath with some supplementary matches which came off after 'the meeting,' that he received a letter (the crossings of which were all swept with the daintiest little handwriting) from Carry, who closed her epistle of six full sheets with an announcement which will be best conveyed to the reader in the words of the letter itself. "But, sir, the great event," said the writer, who with feminine artifice had kept her rarest piece of intelligence for an effective ending to a letter which, it must be owned, was needlessly protracted, "since I wrote to you the day before yesterday, is the sudden departure of Christina Morris from Merton-Piggott as a married woman. Now, sir, don't open your eyes, for they always stare enough; and though I give you full permission to be very much astonished, you mayn't shout, or clap your hands, or make any sort of intemperate noise. She is Mrs. Alexander Barber, and has been married for eleven years to her husband, who is somehow connected with 'the turf.' Perhaps you can tell me something about him, and make my mind

easy with an assurance that he's a respectable man enough; for since you are a *patron* of 'the turf,' I suppose there are *a few respectable people* connected with it. I hear he was some years since Lord Taranflit's 'trainer,' which doubtless means 'trainer of his lordship's horses;' for from the little I have seen of Mr. Barber, I should not say he is exactly qualified to train a nobleman. Of course, every one here is in full talk about the affair, which has created quite 'a sensation,' and even took me by surprise, though (as you know, and *will be ready to bear witness to Mrs. Magnum, who is laughing at me for pretending to cleverness*) I was rather more sagacious than the rest of the world. Dr. Magnum was the first to know of it, and he learnt it without much warning. When he went into Christina's lodgings, to pay her his customary daily visit, Mrs. Hopkins (the landlady) told him that a gentleman who had driven into town the night before, and had slept at the Melford Arms, was closeted with Mrs. Morris in her sitting-room. On hearing this, Dr. Magnum sent up his name, and was admitted in half a minute, when he found Christina all in tears and blushes, and ready to faint. The poor thing could scarcely say, 'Dr. Magnum, let me introduce you to my husband;' but it all came bouncing out somehow or other. The doctor wished her every sort of happiness (thinking the wedding was quite a recent affair); but when he found out his mistake, he inquired if Mr. Wylie had long known that she was married, to which Christina answered, 'Oh! yes, Dr. Magnum, my uncle has known of it ever since we were married; but as Mr. Barber's circumstances made it advisable for me to continue my profession, we never published the fact to the world—not even to our best friends.' Well, dear,

the news flew like lightning. Next to the doctor, I and Mrs. Magnum were the first to get the intelligence ; and as Fanny proposed that we should go to Christina and tender her our congratulations, and as I was naturally just a little curious to see what Mr. Barber was like, we walked up to Glynn Street, to give the wife our best wishes. As soon as she saw us, she began to cry and sob, and excuse herself for having deceived us into thinking her an unmarried woman ; and altogether it was such a painful scene, that in less than two minutes I was heartily sorry we went, and yet poor Christina seemed very grateful to us for coming. As for Mr. Barber, we both of us dislike his appearance very much. He is a middle-sized man (which isn't a fault in my estimation) and is forty-five at the very least (which of course he is not to be held accountable for) ; but he has a pale, haggard complexion, which Fanny and I both think a bad sign in a man, and shaggy, dissipated black whiskers. His face might have been handsome once, for the nose is aquiline, and the features are well enough, except the eyes, which are cunning, foxy eyes, and seem to prick you like gimlets, and sting you like gnats. If I write much more about the man, I shall dislike him as much as Captain Bagot does, who, in his violent way, calls him a name which it would not be fit for me to write, though I may tell you that it begins with 'scoun' and ends with 'drel.' After all, the worst thing that Captain Bagot can bring against him is that some years since (just before Christina's marriage) he gave some water to Lord Taranflit's bay-colt 'Snapdragon,' a few minutes before it had to run a race at one of the July meetings. Now, there can't be anything very heinous in this. 'For,' I said to Captain Bagot, 'perhaps he

gave the colt a pail of cold water out of sheer humanity, to keep it from flagging in the hot July weather.' By the way the captain laughed at me, I see I shall never hear the last of my suggestion; but if it was a silly one, it was at least *charitable*, which is more than Captain Bagot seems disposed to be towards poor Christina's husband. It would seem, however, that Lord Taranflit was very indignant about the cold water, and having discharged Mr. Barber from his service, laid the affair before the Snaffle Club, which appears not to have given Lord Taranflit the support he expected, as Captain Bagot says, 'If the club had done its duty, Mr. Barber wouldn't have dared to show his head in King's Heath again.' My comment on all this discussion is, that since poor Christina has married the man, Merton-Piggott is in honour bound to make the best of him.

"But the strangest part of the story still remains to be told. As soon as Mrs. Barber recovered her composure, she told us she was going to leave the town instantly. We represented to her (and so had Dr. Magnum before us) that her arm was not yet sufficiently healed to justify her in taking a long journey; but she would have her own way. So all in a trice her things were packed up, ready to be conveyed by the stage waggon to Easthaven, about six miles from which place Mr. Barber has a small farm; and in the afternoon Mr. Barber drove her away in a light, high-wheeled, spidery gig (that hasn't room even for a bonnet-box under the seat), which was drawn by a very elegant, long-limbed, curving-necked brown horse. He was dressed in a white hat and light drab over-coat, and as he drove over Abbey Place

and saw Fanny and me at one of the front windows of Bassingbourne House, he waved his hand to us quite familiarly. This piece of *bad taste* (Fanny calls it *insolence*) is the worst thing I actually know of the man. On the whole I am depressed by the occurrence; and I must say, I am a good deal disappointed in Christina, she ought to have married a person of higher position than Mr. Barber. But not another line from me to-day. Write by return of post, dear. If you have nothing else to write about, you can at least give me the latest betting intelligence. I am interested in whatever you care about.—Your own CARRY.”

If Captain Bagot laughed at Carry’s suggestion that Mr. Barber had given Lord Taranflit’s colt a pail of cold water out of considerations of pure mercy, Edgar was even more tickled by it; for he was sufficiently acquainted with Carry’s wayward drollery, to know that she had in the first instance made her suggestion in order to rouse the explosive Captain Bagot’s scorn, and that in the second instance she had reported it to him (Edgar) with an affectation of seriousness, under the feeling that her jest would lose much of its pleasantry if it were divested of the unsophisticated simplicity in which it was originally dressed.

“Well,” observed Edgar to himself, as, dallying with his breakfast in the coffee-room of ‘King Charles’s Hotel,’ King’s Heath, he summed up the stirring intelligence contained in Carry’s budget, “I can, with a safe conscience, *bear witness to Mrs. Magnum* in support of Carry’s pretensions to extraordinary sagacity, but I am sure I don’t know what I can say in favour of ‘Alec Barber,’ except that he’s one of the best steeple-chase riders in all England, and that I have ridden in half-a-dozen races against him. I’ve heard he got into

trouble here with Lord Taranflit; but as that affair happened before I cared much about King's Heath, I never heard all the particulars of the story—which (like most stories) was a tale that could be read in two ways. Of course, my excellent friend, Captain Bagot, reads the story in the way that bears hardest on the weaker side. Still, there's no doubt about it, the man is in bad odour here, though the Snaffle Club let him appear in the betting-rooms, and on 'the Heath.' I've only come across the fellow in the 'corn country,' where he is a regular attendant at the principal races, and a favourite steeple-chase rider. But I fear he's no grand match for Miss Christina;—for poor must be the best living that a 'racing-man' (as he would call himself) can pick up as dealer, and steeple-chase jockey, when he doesn't stand in high favour with any of the great patrons of sport. Some years since, he had a lucky horse—'Brandy-Punch,'—which won him a pot of money; but when he made the mistake of laying heavily on 'Scarecrow,' he was forced to sell 'Brandy-Punch' to Sir Hugh Marlowe; and since he parted on that occasion with his miraculous goose, I should say his golden eggs haven't been very plentiful. To think of that man being secretly married to poor old Shakespeare Wylie's niece! What occasion can there have been for mystery about the matter? Well, if the fellow can only keep his head above water, he's about as grand a husband as a strolling actress has a right to. Anyhow, since I have saved his wife's life, the man will be nothing better than what begins with 'scoun' and ends with 'drel,' if he ever again rides up to the winning-flag before me."

And having thus communed within himself, Mr.

Edgar Turrett put a cigar in his mouth (unlimited smoking was allowed at King's Heath), and strolled down the High Street of the town, enjoying the strong October breezes that came careering over the dry turf of the unenclosed country, and sweeping in strong current along the thoroughfare. King's Heath was unusually full; and the High Street was alive with loungers. Passing under 'the palace,' Edgar looked up at its silent windows, and thought for a moment of all the bright glances that had in times gone by sped through them; thought too of all the gallant company who had feasted and revelled in its banquetting-room and galleries. "By Jove!" said the young man, taking his cigar from his lips, "I feel as if I could hear Nell Gwynn and her jolly friends swelling the choruses of Tom D'Urfey's songs. But this wind is too high for smoking. So I'll finish my cigar in the betting-room, and hear 'what's up.'"

Whereupon, Edgar dismissed the past from his mind, and after the fashion of his day, resolved to live in the present. It never occurred to him to pry into the future, and conjecture what fate was in store for the merry monarch's dwelling, which in this present year of 1863 is in the hands of a congregation of pious worshippers, who sing psalms under the roof which whilom resounded with the melodies of D'Urfey and Eccles.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW MR. EDGAR TURRETT WAS GENEROUS RATHER
THAN PRUDENT IN HIS RESOLVES.

HAVING finished his cigar in the betting-rooms, where he read the papers, and chatted with his friends, Edgar (before riding out upon the heath to witness two or three matches that were fixed for the afternoon) lounged into the theatre, the entrance to which was in a by-lane leading out of the High Street. The posters on the doors informed him that Mr. Shakespeare Wylie would for the next three evenings entertain the King's Heath public with the same drama that had been acted by his company on the occasion of Christina's unfortunate benefit; and on penetrating to the green-room, Edgar found the worthy old manager writing at a table which was covered with playbills, theatrical haberdashery, wigs, powder-boxes, pomatum pots, and a tray of plates and tankards for a not luxurious mid-day repast of which Mr. Wylie was soon about to partake in conjunction with a few chosen members of his corps.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Wylie. I have taken the liberty to walk in, to pay you my respects," observed Edgar, drawing the manager's attention from a letter, in the composition of which he was so intently occupied that he had not heard his visitor's footsteps.

"My dear sir—my dear Mr. Turrett," returned the manager, starting up in a flurry, and with signs of great mental discomposure in his countenance, "your presence surprises me—startles me, my dear Mr. Edgar; but it is not the less welcome, believe me. I presumed that I should not see you here, as the regular days of the 'meeting' are over. But I suppose you are stopping on to witness a few chance matches."

"Yes," said the young Squire, "I thought I'd make out ten days or so here, when I was about it. The weather is favourable, and the races have been unusually good. But I shall return to Castle Hollow to-morrow, stopping, perhaps, a night at Merton-Piggott on my way home. Can I be the bearer of any message for you to your niece?"

"No, I thank you, Mr. Edgar; I—I needn't trouble you. I am just writing to Christina, and the Honourable Mr. Arthur Castlewood (my Lord Taranflit's youngest son) has been so gracious as to give me 'a frank.' So I shall have no occasion for your good services. Do take a seat, my dear sir. You find me in confusion; but I feel myself not the less honoured by your presence."

With every fresh word Mr. Shakespeare Wylie's embarrassment and confusion so greatly increased, that Edgar, feeling it would be ungenerous and even cruel to play with his feelings, without avowing his know-

ledge of Christina's movements, observed—"A letter reached me from Merton-Piggott this morning, informing me that your niece is not Miss Christina Morris, but Mrs. Alexander Barber. You wont think I am prying into your family secrets, when I say the object of my call is to express a sincere hope that she may be happy; and to assure you, Mr. Wylie, that my friends around Merton-Piggott (without caring to inquire for the motives which have induced the lady to keep her marriage a secret for so many years) will always retain their old regard for Mrs. Barber, as well as for yourself."

"My dear Mr. Turrett," replied the manager, so much re-assured by his visitor's words that he was able to resume his seat, and arrange the tassel of his velvet skull-cap, "you have that command of language which, in his younger days, characterized your honoured grandfather; but you are powerless to speak any words save those of kindness. My heart tells me that your sympathy is sincere; but—but—I dare not trust myself to speak about Christina. The publication of her marriage to the world recalls the only occasion of her entire life when she caused pain to the uncle who had lavished upon her the solicitude of parental affection. She is the only child of my only sister; a sister who died in giving birth to her only child; a sister who was younger than myself by nearly twenty years. And her father was an old and dearly-beloved friend, who died when Christina was scarce three months old. Think of it, my dear sir;—she is the daughter of the dearest friend of my early manhood, the daughter of my only sister, and the woman who has hitherto been the stay and comfort of my failing years."

"Well, well, Mr. Wylie," returned Edgar, wishing

to comfort the simple old man, who was beginning to shed tears, as he was rather too prone to do, whenever he could find a sympathetic auditor of his sorrows, "let's hope she's happily married."

"Happily married!" exclaimed the manager, striking his fist upon the table, as his eyes flashed with indignation. "Why, sir, the man is a scoundrel!—a rascal!—a mere race-course cheat!—a paltry knave! Don't you know the man's history? I thought every King's Heath gentleman had the story marked down in his memoranda of turf roguery! That man betrayed his master, Lord Taranflit, my most noble patron; and at the very time that he was picking his master's pocket, he was stealing my only child from *me*—from *me*, whom he called his friend. He induced poor Christina to fix her affections upon him when she was at an age—when even good girls will love any rogue and knave who flatters them sufficiently. I knew nothing of his infernal wishes, till the scandal of his rascally conduct to Lord Taranflit was on everyone's lips; and by that time he had the poor child in his hands, to do what he liked with. When he asked me to accept him for Christina's husband, I told him the scorn I had for him; but she was of a different mind, and swore—in the romantic way girls will sometimes swear, when they're *not* on the stage—that she would cling to him in his adversity. Ah! my dear sir, when she took up that tone, *I* knew I hadn't the power to hold her in. It's easier to stop a woman from any other madness than the folly of self-sacrifice. There's a strong tendency to suicide in the whole sex. Did you ever know a young girl who wasn't made to take delight in throwing herself away on a fool, at the first favourable opportunity? Well, sir, I had no authority but love

over the girl; and she left me, went up to London, and married the fellow; and before twelve months were over she came back to me, penitent, half-starved, ill-used, and a mother!"

"What! is she a mother?"

"Ay, that's where his influence over her lies, my dear friend," returned the manager, lowering his voice, and proceeding with his story in a calmer fashion. "She has a little girl, who's at boarding-school. If the innocent brat had died, his power over Christina would have died out too; but God has preserved the child, doubtless for some good purpose. Far be it from me to attack the ways of Providence, or to wish for the death of any living creature! Of course, I received her with open arms, and pledged my word to do all I could to make her happy; but I insisted that while she lived with me she shouldn't disgrace me by bearing the name of that scamp of a husband. Fortunately, her marriage was unknown on my circuit, for she and her fellow had lived in London—whilst he was waiting till he could show his face again in his old racing haunts; and when she left me there were few to ask questions about her, for she hadn't at that time attracted much attention. The most curious were satisfied when I told them that she had gone to London to complete her professional education in 'the metropolitan school.' Would that I had no worse lies to render account for hereafter than that innocuous fib! So she joined my troop again, poor soul!—the troop in which, I may almost say, she was suckled; and as my niece—and as the cleverest actress (though I say it) to be found in all England, off the London boards—she has been a great favourite. But I never would recognize her husband."

"But she has maintained some intercourse with him? I suppose she has."

"Yes, yes,—my dear sir;—but I have resolutely looked away from it! How could I acknowledge him? At King's Heath my chief patron has been that most noble and generous nobleman, my Lord Taranflit. For five-and-twenty years I have never entered this town, without being honoured with a bespeak from his lordship, and receiving from his generosity a purse of twenty guineas. How then, in the eyes of the world, could I avow myself connected with the dishonest servant whom that liberal patron had spurned from him with ignominy! But I would not reflect with severity on my ill-starred though accomplished niece. She has been a good girl,—a dear good child to me,—with this one exception of marrying a worthless fellow against my will."

"Wylie, my good old friend," observed Edgar at this point of the manager's domestic revelations, "don't think worse of Alec Barber than he deserves. It's true, there's one ugly story about him, but, at the time of the row, opinion was divided about the question of dispute. Though Lord Taranflit is a generous and high-spirited nobleman, he can be violent, without sufficient reason—and vindictive also; and some of the leading members of the Snaffle Club were convinced that he was unjust to Alec. Now, if you'd take my advice—(and a young man's advice is sometimes worthy of acceptance even by an old man), you'd join with those who take the most lenient view of Alec's conduct in that matter. Of course, it wouldn't do for you to offend a patron; but, if Christina disappears from the circuit, Lord Taranflit will never trouble his head about her—as to where she may be living, or whether she has married

any one,—still less, whether you are on good terms with her husband. Unless you have some better reason for continuing the quarrel than that old Taranfit hubbub, shake hands with Alec, and make it up.”

“Truth to tell you, my brave young patron—what you would have me do, is what my dear Christina is beseeching me, at the present time, in a letter I had from her this morning. A charming and mellifluous composition it is!” returned the manager, becoming magniloquent again, as his deep emotions were subsiding. “It may be that I regard her achievements with fond pride; but I must be permitted to maintain that her prose is Addisonian in its grandeur and sweetness. Ah, sir—what accomplishments does that gentle and richly-endowed creature possess! And to reflect,—how she has thrown herself away on a horse-riding adventurer! Why, Mr. Turrett, with her manners—manners that would become a duchess,—and beauty—rare beauty, sir, that would grace a court, she might have looked to marriage as a means of exaltation to the highest pinnacle of gentility.”

“No doubt about it, Wylie,” answered Edgar, humouring the old man’s inordinate pride in his niece. “But what you must do, is to make the best of a bad job. Now tell me, Wylie,—has he ever ill-treated her?—I mean, with personal violence? You say that she came back to you—ill-used. How was she ill-used?”

“My dear sir,” whispered the manager, wincing under the inquiry, “she and her infant were half-starved. She had tasted the bitterness of penury,—drained its nauseous cup to the very dregs. Her husband could find no occupation in London,—and the

marvel to me is that he kept his pernicious neck out of a halter."

"But he hadn't been guilty of any act of brutal violence to her?"

"They'd had words—bitter words; and unkind words are worse than blows."

"That may be," answered Edgar, with a smile, "but husbands will on occasions speak harshly to their wives! So, if I am not mistaken, his ill-treatment of her never went beyond this;—that he married her when he was unable to support her; that by so doing he brought her to the degradation and sufferings of extreme poverty; and that poor Christina was so little pleased with them, that she was glad to come back to you."

"And, by the soul of Hercules, my dear young friend!" exclaimed Mr. Wylie, hitting the table again with his fist, "what do you call ill-using a woman, if that isn't barbarous ill-usage?"

"It is ill-usage, no doubt; but Christina's fate might have been worse!"

"Gad!—my dear young gentleman!" cried the little man, "if I had ever seen him strike her, I would have buried my sword in his heart."

Which magnanimous declaration was rendered all the more terrible to the hearer, by the fact that Mr. Shakespeare Wylie possessed several swords amongst his theatrical properties.

"Come," said Edgar, "I see, things have not gone so far to ruin, that they can't be patched up. As for Alec Barber,—I am one of those who don't see him in the colour which is given him by his enemies. I have known a little of him, ever since I began to ride in the

‘corn country,’ and that’s eight or nine years ago ; and during that time, I’ve never heard of his doing a shabby bit of blackguardism,—and if he had been guilty of any such act, throughout that considerable period of time, I should certainly have heard of it. Of course, he has frequently been hard pressed for money,—men in his way of life often are ; and though he was making money, some three or four years back, when he had that lucky horse ‘Brandy-Punch,’ he lost it all again, and came to grief. So, since his unfortunate marriage with Christina, he hasn’t been able to do much for her.”

“I wouldn’t be unjust to him, Mr. Turrett,” put in the manager. “When he has been under the smiles of that fickle goddess who so often lures men to destruction, he has never omitted to press Christina to return to him ; and with the exception of one year, he has always maintained his child. But Christina has always resolutely declared she would never live with him till he had a permanent home to offer her. Indeed, when he was winning all those steeple-chases with the horse you have just mentioned, I was fearful he was getting so rich, he would settle himself in some more reputable way of life—and take my child from me.”

“Come—that’s in his favour,” was Edgar’s cheerful comment ; and then he added, with a pause, “What’s he doing at Easthaven ? I hear he is taking her to a farm he has up that way.”

“Yes—yes. He has a small run of marsh land at ‘Little Deane,’ about six miles from Easthaven, where he’s doing business, breeding and rearing colts. The land, I am told, suits young horse-stock—but I know nothing of such matters. Christina assures me that he has been doing well for these two years past.”

“That’s good again ! Then he’s in luck ! I always

said he was a clever fellow, and would light upon his legs one of these fine days."

"For poor Christina's sake, I hope you may be right, my dear friend. But I distrust the man—I detest him! There's villany in his eye! A vile, pernicious eye the fellow has!"

"You and I mayn't say so, Wylie—for he's Christina's husband. Whatever he has been, I believe there's the making in him of a prosperous man. He and I have never exchanged many words; but what little I have personally seen of him is in his favour. There isn't in all the 'light lands' a better eye for the good points of a horse (under difficulties) than that same vile, pernicious eye against which you are so severe; and a better steeple-chase jockey than Alec Barber never threw his leg over pig-skin. It's an article of my faith that there must be some real good stuff in any man who is a bold, plucky rider; and I always respect a man who, besides going across country with pluck, rides with judgment. And Alec Barber does both! Rely on me, Wylie, when I say Master Alec isn't so bad as he is painted, and will astonish you by turning out a good fellow. So, old friend, take a peaceable line towards him. When you get up to Easthaven with your troop, go over to 'Little Deane,' and crack a bottle of wine with him; and rely on me, if I can do Alec a good turn, I will."

After more words of encouragement and counsel, Edgar bade the manager farewell, leaving him much more amicably disposed to Christina's husband than he had found him.

Mounting his horse in the yard of 'King Charles's Hotel,' the young Squire rode off to the Heath, in great good-humour with his morning's work, and

cherishing in his breast the resolve (which, however generous it may appear to the reader, can scarcely be commended for prudence) to extend his patronage to Mr. Alec Barber, and endeavour to furbish up the dubious and very rusty reputation of Lord Taranflit's discarded trainer. Thus, within a very brief space of time, the pugnacious heir of Castle Hollow (who had a rough as well as a smooth side to his nature) formed two unquestionably perilous projects—namely, to fight the new rector of Merton-Piggott, and to befriend a horse-dealing jockey, who, in the phraseology of the knowing ones, had been 'pretty considerably blown upon.' And yet this aggressive, high-and-mighty young squireen flattered himself that he was a very 'hard-headed and practical fellow.'

In justice to him, it must be admitted that he had excuses for his rashness. Apart from a natural tendency to take the weaker side in every quarrel—whether the row was a street fight, or a misunderstanding between a great man and dependent—Edgar had a few not discreditable reasons for wishing to think well of the trainer. Having, by an act of gallant promptness, saved Christina's life, he was greatly interested to secure her happiness. Generous natures are prone to like those whom they have benefited, and to aim at doing more for those in whose behalf they have already achieved much. Edgar nursed, therefore, a strong desire to secure from sorrow the poor woman whom he had rescued from death. In addition to this, he knew that Carry Bromhead would receive a favourable account of Alec Barber's history and prospects with lively satisfaction, and feel personally grateful to him (Edgar) for every step he might take for the benefit of Mr. Shakespeare Wylie's niece.

So Mr. Edgar rode over the Heath in the best possible terms with himself; and, as the result of 'the matches' was to place twenty-five guineas in his pocket, he returned to dinner at 'King Charles's Hotel' in even a higher state of elation.

Before sitting down to dine with half a dozen gentlemen of his acquaintance, who, like him, had stayed on for a few days after 'the meeting,' Edgar found time to write a brief note to his aunt, and a long one to Carry—in which latter epistle occurred the following passage:—"So, my dear Carry, I managed to act the part of peace-maker to some good purpose; and I've no doubt that, ere many weeks have passed, our dear friend Christina will have the pleasure of welcoming her uncle to her own house at 'Little Deane,' which, by the way, is far from an agreeable locality. The entire parish is made up of marsh land, and is not more than five miles distant from one of the most noxious, pestiferous, and utterly unmanageable districts of the east level of the fen country. But the pasture is just the thing for young horse-stock. I can't undertake to drain her husband's land for him; but when occasion presents itself for doing so, I'll give him a helping hand. The steeple-chase season is soon coming on in the 'corn country,' and when I go over there to see if I can't break my neck, I shall most likely come across him, in which case he shall have my countenance. I leave this place to-morrow morning, and shall get into Merton-Piggott late at night, in time for a bed at the Melford Arms. The next morning, I shall get up to Gray Street, and pay you my devotions in person. So no more at present (except the hundred kisses which I shall put upon the seal of this packet) from—your own EDGAR."

To Aunt Adelaide, the young Squire wrote :—" Dear Aunt,—I shall dine with you and my grandfather the day after to-morrow. I hope the rent-dinner went off well. I am really very sorry I couldn't manage to be at it—and the more so, as it had been put off twice for my convenience. Give my best love to my dear grandfather, and assure him I am longing to see him again, and recount the events of the races, which have been *excellent*. Some of the 'knowing ones' have lost great sums, but in my small way I have, with my usual luck, made a little money.—Your troublesome boy, EDGAR."

This note was given to Aunt Adelaide, as she lay in her bed, to which she had been confined for forty-eight hours, with fever, and headache, and nervous excitement, which had so greatly alarmed the Squire, that Dr. Magnum was summoned from Merton-Piggott,—although the invalid faintly protested that there was no cause for alarm, and that she did not wish to see her physician.

It was not the only note brought to Aunt Adelaide by the morning's post. On the salver there was a second note, by the side of Edgar's epistle.

"Put them on the table, Hannah," said Adelaide Turrett, as her eyes glanced at the superscriptions of the two letters, "I won't read them—quite yet."

"Have you finished breakfast, Miss?" inquired the faithful and prudent Hannah, who, wishing to save her heels by the exercise of her head, did not care to go downstairs empty-handed if the lady had done with her breakfast things.

"Leave me, Hannah," answered Adelaide Turrett, with unusual sharpness,—"*Leave me!* No words, I can't bear noise, I wish to be alone."

Whereupon Hannah disappeared, without waiting for a repetition of the order.

Then Adelaide Turrett (being alone,—without even a servant's eyes to witness her) raised herself in her bed; and, death-like, pale, and trembling, clutched the two notes.

She tore open Edgar's epistle first, possessing herself of its contents in thirty seconds. "Oh, thank God! thank God!" ejaculated the lady, as she dropped the hastily-perused note on the table, "thank God that he *was* away from home! If they had met upon this ground,—how terrible!"

Having uttered this ejaculation, Adelaide Turrett took up the second note, and scanned its direction. "Yes, yes," she murmured to herself, whilst she slowly examined the characters on the outside of the letter, 'it is the same handwriting,—it is *his*! Time,—and anguish,—and shame,—and degradation,—and perilous hardship—have not altered it! Oh, my God, pardon him,—as I have long since done!"

For several minutes the wretched lady,—for deep, extreme, unspeakable wretchedness was furrowing her wan face—held her throbbing head in her feeble hands.

At length she had sufficient nerve to open the letter which had already caused her such deep emotion, and to read as follows:—

"According to the promise which Miss Turrett extracted from him when he last saw her, William Newton writes these few lines to inform her that he has arrived at Easthaven, and is lodging at the Anchor Inn, Ocean Street.

"William Newton begs leave to repeat the assurance he gave Miss Turrett, when he accidentally met her on a recent occasion,—the assurance, namely, that he deeply regrets having occasioned Miss Turrett alarm

and consternation by unintentionally crossing her path.

"Solely because Miss Turrett enjoined him to do so, William Newton now sends his present address, and states that he awaits a communication from her. He is ready to reside in any remote part of England which Miss Turrett may name; but he implores her not to object to his living in his native country till the end of his days,—whatever that end may be!"

This was the entire epistle;—an epistle which had evidently been penned with caution, in order that if it fell into any hands except those for which it was intended, it might not reveal a secret existing between the writer and her whom he addressed.

"Wretched man!" murmured Adelaide Turrett, when she had carefully read and re-read the letter. "Poor, fallen man!—and yet retaining a sense of honour—at least for one of those whom he has injured! Thank God—oh, how fervently do I thank God that *he* is less base than shamed! Not for myself do I so thank God,—but for others; for my dear father's sake, and for the sake of my dear, dear Edgar! There is still room for hope! Oh, I must hope! It cannot be that, after all these long years of hidden torture, the awful secret of which I and my dear father are the guardians, will be proclaimed to the world! Oh,—surely,—surely,—we shall be permitted to 'live it down!'"

For many minutes Adelaide Turrett lay back upon the pillows of her bed, meditating in silence on certain recent occurrences which had so disturbed her mind, that Dr. Magnum was ministering to her—as one whom deep, hidden anxiety had smitten with nervous fever.

When the lips of the meek, enduring woman—gentle

in her misery, even as she was ever gentle in joy—again fashioned words, it was to utter this brief, fervent supplication to the everlasting and ever-merciful Father of all living creatures, whose ear is always ready to hearken to the desolate and oppressed, when they cry unto Him out of the distress that covers them.

“ Oh, dear Father in Heaven !” prayed the suppliant with deep solemnity, “ Searcher of hearts, from whose omniscience nothing can be hidden ! hear me now that I beseech Thee to ward off the hideous calamity that hangs over me, and all who are most dear to me,—of human race. If I have erred in Thy sight, in covering the dreadful past with life-long falsehood,—if I have sinned in endeavouring to hide from the eyes of man the offence of my early waywardness,—if I have been impious in conspiring with my dear, devoted, unselfish father, to shroud my deeds in darkness, though Thou hast ordered Thy servants to walk openly and without deception,—if my prayers that I might live my secret down into the grave have only been offences against Thee,—then, dear God, pardon me—pardon me, not because the object of my wrong-doing has been to preserve others from woe and shame, but for the sake of Him in whose name the worst sinners may sue to Thee for forgiveness. But if the course (which I entered on long years since, after earnest prayer to Thee to guide me aright, and in which with uncomplaining endurance of the sharpest anguish I have persisted unto this present time) does not appear to Thee to be evil,—then grant it may be continued to a successful end ; so that, when I and my dear father are laid in quiet graves, the terrible, unutterable secret of our lives may, beyond a possibility of discovery, *have been lived down.*”

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE VISITOR.

IN order that readers may learn the events which caused Adelaide Turrett's mental distress, this history must retrace its steps for a few days.

It must go back to the day preceding that on which (to the amazement of Assembly Room loungers) Mr. Alexander Barber, arrayed in his white hat and light drab over-coat, drove Christina Barber (previously known by the name of Christina Morris) over Abbey Place, under the windows of Bassingbourne House, and out of Merton-Piggott, by the Easthaven Road.

On the morning of that day Adelaide Turrett (*vice* Edgar Turrett, absent at King's Heath) was the companion of the old blind Squire, as he took his usual after-breakfast promenade on the lawns, and walks, and terrace of the Hollow House garden. The Squire had always taken great delight in the beautiful grounds, on which his daughter expended so much care; but since his vision had been completely blotted out, he had derived even more lively satisfaction from

the lovely objects which he could no longer discern with the bodily eye. It was his pleasure to be led every day about the garden, from spot to spot, having the aspect of each bed minutely described to him by those affectionate attendants on his failing years—his daughter and his grandson. Much subdued and softened by blindness, the veteran was nevertheless very patient and cheerful under his affliction, and with characteristic energy devised means for alleviating the calamity to which Providence had subjected him.

It was a serene, balmy morning, one of those soft summerly mornings which (in most years) appear at the close of October, to bow with courtier-like graciousness to the retiring skirts of summer-tide, and smile welcome to a sterner season. A gentle south-wind, blowing down the Linnet and over the heath, passed through the garden, tenderly lowering red leaves to gravelled walks, and singing a plaintive lullaby amidst branches which were every hour becoming more bare of foliage. More than ordinarily pleasant were the grounds to old Antony Turrett on that morning—which (without sadness) he observed to his child would be amongst the last of that year's fine days. He remained in the open air longer than was his wont—sitting by turns on each of the familiar benches, testing by pressure of foot the fineness and closeness of the turf, visiting the green-houses and vineries, asking about the appearance of the English poplars, and elms, and limes, and Scotch firs—catching too the sound of the pigeons, as with rustling, flapping wings they settled down in flocks upon the steep roof of the Hollow House.

“Adelaide,” at length said the veteran, as the sun-dial

marked the advent of noon, "lead me in now—for I am fatigued, and must take a short nap before our afternoon ride. This place is passing sweet—I never enjoyed it more. Most men would think that a blind old age has little that is worth living for;—but they're wrong. My days are days of happiness; and I should like to live for many years—to walk about these delicious grounds."

"I pray God you may, dear father," interposed Adelaide, devoutly.

"Nay, nay, child,—it may not be. Most probably you'll have to walk here, at the close of next year, without me," answered the Squire, pausing to take the hand of his daughter's disengaged arm, and raise it to his lips.

"But remember, darling," continued the Squire, after this act of old-world courtesy, "when you walk here without me,—whether it be next year, or one a little more distant,—that at the close of his calm old age thy father, of all the blessings with which he was surrounded, prized no one so much as the child who was his joy and pride throughout life. Lay these few words, darling, in thy heart. In the days of thy coming loneliness, it will comfort thee to stand here and say, 'My father spoke those words to me, on this very spot.'"

These words were spoken in a corner of the garden that was as remote from the house as any point of the grounds, and when the Squire had uttered them, he proceeded on his way to the house, leaning upon his daughter, who conducted him under the branches of an outskirting plantation—from which they emerged upon the carriage-road.

And as they came upon the hard carriage-road, Adelaide Turrett saw in the middle of a turfed by-path (that

turned out of the drive, towards the kitchen and offices of the 'Hollow House') an elderly man with a pack upon his back, walking straight down upon her and her father. He was within six yards of them when Adelaide first observed him.

"Who's there!" inquired the Squire of Adelaide—his quick ear detecting the stranger's footsteps on the grass. "The men are at dinner."

"It's only a hawker, father, paying us a visit," was Adelaide's answer.

"Come for a draught of Hollow House ale?" observed the Squire lazily. "Well, Tom will give him one, if he deserves it."

"What are you selling?" inquired Adelaide of the man, who had come close up, and was then touching his hat in token of respect to 'the quality.'

"Books and stationery, my lady," answered the man, in a tone of voice that showed he at least belonged to the superior order of itinerant traders. "If the Squire wants a diary for the coming year, I have a good assortment."

"I am stone blind, my good friend," answered the Squire good naturedly,—“so you may not hope to have me for a customer.”

"A thousand pardons, your worship!" exclaimed the man.

"Oh, no harm done, don't trouble yourself to ask pardon. Perhaps my daughter may want some of your wares, though I don't. You must speak to her."

"I want stationery of all sorts," observed Adelaide, "but I can't buy till I see what you have to sell."

Without waiting for a second permission to display his goods, the hawker dropped his pack upon the ground, and speedily opened it.

"Good," said Adelaide, surveying the articles which in a trice were laid out upon the grass for exhibition, "I see you have what I want. If you wait here for a minute, I'll return, and make some purchases of you."

"You had better tell the man to come into your drawing-room," observed the Squire.

"No, father," returned the lady, "that will give him unnecessary trouble, in making him repack, just to unpack again. It will take you almost as many minutes to put up your goods, my friend, as it has taken you seconds to display them. Why, father, he has made a perfect bazaar at the foot of my 'Grand-mother's elm-tree.'"

"As you like, my lady. Trouble is no great concern to a tradesman," said the hawker, with civil alacrity.

"No, keep where you are," replied Adelaide Turrett;—and then, addressing the Squire, she added, "I'll lead you in-doors, father; for you are tired, and ought to be resting yourself—for your ride. This good man will wait a minute for me here."

"Very good," assented the Squire,—hospitably adding to the dealer, "But when the lady has transacted her business with you, go to the kitchen, my man, and have a mug of ale."

"Many thanks to your worship."

In 1820, the itinerant dealers of the 'light lands' were a very different class of men from their successors of this present year, 1863. They were welcomed to every dwelling throughout the wild region,—invited to partake of meat and ale in the Squire's kitchen, to sit down at the upper end of the table whereat the 'warm' yeoman or thriving tenant-farmer presided at the mid-day meal of his family and workmen, to enjoy rest and gossip and the best of cold water in the peasant's

cottage. Like the Merton-Piggott fair, the hawking of the 'light lands' has fallen into disrepute, because the need for it has passed away. Half a century since, a large part of the traffic in the ordinary commodities of life, that did not take place at 'the fair,' was effected through the agency of packmen, who, tramping over heath and moorland, over sandy sweep and flat fen, supplied the inhabitants of isolated dwellings with the drapery and hosiery, books and stationery, cutlery and spices, haberdashery and shoes, which the descendants of those inhabitants now buy in the shops of neighbouring towns and villages (to which there is easier access now than there was formerly)—or, in many instances, purchase of London purveyors, with whom the 'light land' railways enable them to have frequent intercourse.

The 'fellow on the tramp,' who, at this present date, should enter the pleasure-grounds of a mansion in the 'light lands,' would be promptly warned off the premises by the butler, and be threatened with pains and penalties if he should again be caught bearing his villanous pack within the garden fence. The watch-dog would bay at him for a thief; the Squire's children, playing on the lawn, would shrink from him as a mysterious representative of the evil principle, the nursemaids meanwhile eyeing him with scorn as 'a trumpery cheat,' altogether beneath their social condition. Nor would the nursemaids be utterly in the wrong; for with the growing disesteem of his vocation, the hawker has gradually become less estimable, until he has, in most cases, resulted in nothing better than a cunning vagabond, preying upon the credulity and ignorance of the very humblest class of our rustic population. But at the period in which

this history commences, the 'light land' pedlars had from time immemorial been an interesting fraternity. Instead of being warred against as social nuisances, they were deemed public benefactors. Carrying about with them from homestead to homestead the gossip of the country, they were the cheery, entertaining news-mongers of 'old-world' life. Some of them held good French blood in their veins; for when the refugees (on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes) settled at Sedgehassock, and took to worsted weaving, many of them became pedlars in the warm months, hawking about the 'light lands' the goods which they had manufactured in the winter season. Frequently they became rich men at the close of their days, having prospered as merchants, after relinquishing the itinerant trade; and, if this novel were a critical examination into the pedigrees of aristocratic families, it could point to more than a few high personages who have absorbed by matrimonial alliances the estates and posterity of worthy pedlars who departed this life in the eighteenth century.

The reader, therefore, must not suppose that Adelaide Turrett and the Squire were eccentric in bestowing civil words on a hawker of books and stationery,—or that in so doing they showed him more kindness than such a humble member of society was accustomed to meet with from folks of gentle condition and gentle manners. 'The quality' were at peace with the vagrant population of the 'light lands.' They even extended tranquil good-will to the hordes of gipsies, whom the excursionist, on broiling July days, would find encamped in the sandy dells of the vast heaths;—the brawny men sleeping in the sun's luxurious warmth; the dark visaged, keen-eyed women watching the kettles of their clan; and the brawny children playing

at 'hide-and-seek' amidst the scrubby broom and ragged furze, whilst the patient asses and lank steeds, tethered to the caravans, took from nature's generous hand the food their owners could not have bought for them.

"He seems a civil man," said Adelaide Turrett, as she conducted the Squire to his library.

"He has a pleasant voice."

"We want more hawkers of stationery; the Battistow shopkeeper has neither good ink nor good quills, nor a quire of tolerable paper. I'll encourage the man to come this way again."

"Good!" responded the Squire drowsily, dropping into his easy chair. "And I will take my nap."

Whereupon Aunt Adelaide's light steps retraced their way to the garden, to the impromptu bazaar at the foot of the elm, and she carried out her purpose of encouraging the hawker to repeat his visit.

"There, that will do; never mind the few pence of change," said Aunt Adelaide, dropping half-a-guinea into the dealer's hand, when she had completed her selections from his wares. "Put up your pack, and bring my things into the house. I'll go and tell one of the servants to give you dinner in the kitchen. I suppose you like strong ale. I should, if I had to walk about the country with that heavy bundle on my back."

Evidently touched by the lady's simple urbanity, the man looked up into her face to return his thanks; and, as he did so, his quick glance of grateful emotion made Adelaide Turrett start back and tremble.

"What is your name?" she asked quickly, in an

altered voice, which (though she strove to be calm) betrayed her discomposure to the man, who had dropped his eyes, and was again busying himself with his pack, putting it in marching order.

"William Newton, my lady," responded the man, gruffly, without looking up from his work. "I am a stranger in these parts; they're a new beat for me."

"Look up at me,—look up at me," said Adelaide Turrett, imperiously.

The man did as he was bid, raising a countenance that in ten short seconds had been strangely altered—by anguish, and fear, and horror. He tried to maintain his self-possession; but the trial was too great for him, and the cold sweat starting out upon his face showed how deeply and sharply he was disturbed.

"Herbert," said Adelaide, slowly, in a hollow tone; sadly, horribly unlike the musical softness of her ordinary voice—"Herbert Andrews, you cannot deceive me! I know you; you know me. Have you risen from the grave—to crush me?"

"Miss Turrett," replied the man solemnly, still retaining the kneeling posture to which he had had recourse for the purpose of packing up his wares, and raising his hands as though he were performing an entreaty to Heaven, "would to God that the grave did cover me!—Oh, believe a broken wretch, such as I am, that when I wandered into this part of the country, in search of another person—had I known that my feet would bear me to your presence, or into a district where I should be likely to encounter you, I would have set my face in another direction. *Know* you? I knew you when you left me here and went into the house with your

father, and during your absence I would have fled, only I thought I could best secure myself from every chance of discovery, by remaining. Had you not detected me, I should have passed from that gate, into the wild heath, unknown to you, and lost to you for ever, even as I have been lost to you for eight-and-twenty years. I should have kept my own secret in my breast and have lived it down, even as I have so long prayed to God to let me 'live it down.' Oh, Miss Turrett, believe this! Do with me what you will! Rid yourself of my accursed existence by surrendering me to the law, by which the convict who returns from transportation before expiration of his term of punishment is *doomed to death*! I am in your hands. Whatever course you take, my tongue shall never divulge that which I solemnly promised to you, years since, no power should ever wring from me. But if there is any memory left to you of the good you saw in me when you and I were both young, I implore you to believe that I am not altogether fallen—below every sense of honour and duty."

As he uttered these last words, he rose from the ground, and patiently awaited her reply.

"Herbert," she answered, after two minutes of silence,—speaking with tenderness, even to him, "do not fear me. Mine is not the hand to strike you. Had it been able, it would have raised you when you fell, in that far distant, terrible past that has covered all my after-life with gloom. But we may speak no longer here; we may be observed. In a few minutes the servants will return to their work. You must meet me elsewhere."

"Better not, better not," he interposed, earnestly.

"Let me leave you now, as I should have done, had you not detected me, and go away from your sight for ever, unless a higher power than my will brings me unwittingly across your path again. Part from me, Miss Turrett; and if you cannot forget that your eyes have looked again on the wretched, fallen outcast, comfort yourself with the reflection that, though he still lives, he remains true to that resolve—by which alone he can hope, in the eyes of Heaven, to make atonement for the unspeakable injury he inflicted upon you. Bid me go, and not see you again."

A spare, slight man of something more than middle height, this speaker of words (relating to the secret which Adelaide and her father had conspired together to *live down in secrecy*), by tone of voice, and mode of speech and action, betrayed that in former times he had been of a condition not inferior to that of most men who are designated 'gentlemen.' His costume, appropriate to the calling of a vagrant pedlar; the lines that toil and degradation had bitten deep into a once handsome face; the drooping of a slender frame (not fashioned by Nature for the endurance of long hardship); and all the signs of sordid travail that disfigured his person, were unable to conceal that he had fallen to what he was. As he stood before Adelaide Turrett, holding out his right hand to give emphasis to his last words, a spectator would have judged him to be about sixty years of age; but possibly sorrow, and shame, and physical suffering had done more than time to make him look so old.

"No, no," answered Adelaide Turrett, "I have a duty to perform to you,—duty that you could not exact, but——"

"Oh," interposed the man quickly, wincing under the

lady's last words, "for God's sake, do not mock me—do not goad me—with such mercy. Duty to *me*!"

"Duty, then, to myself," returned Aunt Adelaide, "and duty to my dear father—who has sacrificed so much, done so much for me—require that, since you have re-appeared—you whom I have so long regarded as dead—I should not be left in ignorance of your movements. Let me speak of my duty to him, since I may not speak of my duty to you. But we may not stay here any longer. You will do my bidding?"

"As you wish," replied the man reluctantly. "Yes, of course, I will obey you, *Miss Turrett*."

"I understand that emphasis; yes, I am Miss Turrett."

"I was sure you had never married."

For a few seconds these last few words appeared to surprise and offend Adelaide. Her eyes flashed, and she stepped back quickly from the speaker. Then, not less quickly—with a sad, grateful smile on her countenance, as the right significance of the brief speech broke upon her—drawing near to him again, she extended her right hand, saying, "Herbert, take that hand, take it. You promised to obey me. Take that hand in yours. There was a time when you grasped it eagerly."

Mechanically the fallen man obeyed her.

"Press it to your lips," the woman said hotly. "The man who uttered those last words has a right—in the eyes of heaven, a right—to remind me of his old love for me—my former love for him. Now I know that you have not 'fallen below the dictates of honour and duty.' Herbert, when I next see you, it will be to ask you to let me prove to you that I too remember—honour and duty."

"Miss Turrett," answered the man, in a broken voice, when he had bent down to kiss the hand thus extended to him, "whatever calamities are yet to fall on me, the outcast whom you thus humiliate with mercy, the memory of what you have now said will be an ever-living comfort to me, even till death."

And so saying, he gently lowered that good woman's stainless hand.

"Herbert, I leave you now ; but to-morrow afternoon, at four o'clock, enter the church by the little north door. It shall be unlocked. Be careful that no one sees you enter. When you are once inside you will be safe from observation, and from intrusion. I will meet you there.—Now, go, and, till we meet, avoid the village.—May God, of His goodness, guard you !"

Hastily picking her purchases from the grass, she walked steadily up the drive, and re-entered the Hollow House.

An hour later, she was mounted on her pony, riding by the side of the Squire over the breezy heath, along the cliff-ridge, where she could hear the drowsy rattle of the everlasting ocean.

The Squire was very minute in his inquiries about the articles she had bought of the hawker (for it was in such trivial matters that he found constant diversion), and, after returning from his ride, he made her bring the packets of paper to him, so that his touch might test their quality. To all his questions she replied in an easy tone ; and when he passed on to other topics of chat—at dinner and after dinner—she was, as much as ever, his attentive, sympathizing, and cheerful companion. She left him when he composed himself for his evening nap ; and then, for the first time since her interview with Herbert Andrews, she enjoyed an entire hour of unbroken solitude.

"No," she said, after long meditation, in the silence of her drawing-room, "my dear father may not know that he lives,—has seen,—has spoken with me. To tell him would be to kill him. The agony of such excitement would induce the attack which would terminate his life. I see the path of duty!—but oh, it becomes steeper and more rugged year by year, as I have less and less strength and fortitude to persevere in it.—Hitherto, I have had but one secret,—that which I still hope to live down; that of which my father is the sharer. The larger and more important part of that secret will still remain *ours*,—known only to me and him,—suspected by no other living creature,—not even imagined by that poor man,—to whom my lips will on *that* subject be sealed. My duty to Edgar requires that I should guard that secret as jealously as ever,—even from that wretched man, whom it so closely concerns. But," concluded Adelaide, folding her hands across her breast, as she reclined on her sofa, "ere I can decide what is my duty to *him*, I must seek guidance of that Power who, out of His universal and ever-watchful mercy, has hitherto supported me—a feeble and sorrow-stricken woman—through so many, many years of silent trial."

When the Squire awoke from his nap, in the library, Adelaide was by his side,—to prattle with him, and amuse him for another hour or two, before he retired to rest. How little the blind man dreamt, of what lay nearest to her heart, as she laboured to entertain him! Strange that the musical voice of that good lady, whose every act was a prayer to the all-seeing God, far from being void of guile, was the voice of a deceiver—bent on deceiving her own father!

"Adelaide," said the Squire, putting down the empty

glass from which he had taken his nightly allowance of grog, "lead me into the drawing-room, and give me some music this night, before I go to bed."

Whereupon Adelaide rose ; and having led her father from the library to her drawing-room, she sat down, and lightly touched the keys of the piano.

"Sing to me, my darling," said the Squire, composing himself on the sofa, where his gentle guide had placed him. "You say that time has robbed you of your voice, but to me it is as sweet as ever."

"Oh, not to-night, father ; I am not strong enough to-night," answered Adelaide, who seldom declined to comply with a request from his lips.

"If you are tired, child, don't trouble yourself to play to me."

"It will do me good to play, dear father. I will give you some of your favourite selections from Beethoven."

And commencing once more to touch the keys, Adelaide Turrett remained at the piano for more than an hour, the tears rolling down her patient face, as her art called forth solemn melody.

But the blind Squire could not see the tears.

His ear could only take heed of the music.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN IMPORTANT INTERVIEW.

THE next day the Squire entertained his tenants at the dinner alluded to in Edgar's note as having been postponed for his convenience. The absence of his heir from the banquet was a cause of regret, and even of transient displeasure, to the master of the Hollow House ; but as Mr. Sanderson, the steward (a man better qualified than most farmers to maintain in a numerous assembly such agricultural table-talk as is ordinarily indulged in at country rent-dinners) sat at the landlord's right hand, and as Aunt Adelaide, at the other end of the long dinner-table, exerted herself with characteristic tact to make her father's guests pleased with each other as well as herself, the entertainment passed off to the entire satisfaction of the host.

The party sat down punctually at two o'clock p.m. ; and almost as soon as the cloth had been removed, and the port wine put upon the table, Adelaide Turrett retired from the dining-room, leaving the Squire to sit for half an hour with his tenants, to address them in

two or three brief speeches, and then to withdraw to his library, just as punch-bowls and fresh glasses should be placed upon the board. It was ten minutes to four o'clock, when Adelaide, in the quiet of her drawing-room, heard the sounds of knocking on the mahogany, which she knew was a prelude to the departure of her father from the scene of festivity. In another minute she heard the dining-room door open,—a sound that was speedily followed by the voices of the Squire and Mr. Sanderson, talking in the hall, as the latter conducted his landlord to the library. A short interval—and the steward was heard to re-enter the dining-room, for the purpose of presiding over the party, in the chair just vacated by Mr. Turrett, until the hour appointed for the dispersion of the guests.

As soon as the dining-room door was again shut, Adelaide Turrett went to the library to see how her father was after the exertions of the preceding two hours.

"Pretty well! pretty well, dear!" replied the Squire to her inquiries. "But my heart beats faster than it ought. It went off well—that's a comfort. But it exhausts me to talk to so many people. I fear I must give up these dinners next year, if I live; and yet I don't like to relinquish an old custom. I am an old custom myself, and like to be kept going; so I mayn't give up any of my old ways till I am forced. Heigho!"

"I am glad it went off well."

"Sanderson says all the arrangements were excellent. I trust his eyes. The dishes I partook of couldn't have been better. The preparations must have given you a great deal of trouble, darling."

"Oh, no trouble to me, father. Hester managed everything."

Hester was the cook,—a very grand lady, as surely the queen of the Hollow House kitchen had good reason to be. In the village she was designated ‘Housekeeper,’ and was respectfully addressed as Mrs. Philpott; but in the Hollow House she was called ‘Hester,’ and was understood to be ‘cook,’ at least by every member of the establishment, except the kitchen-maid, who (seeing that the more she exalted her official superior, the more she added to her own dignity) took the same view as ‘the village’ of Mrs. Philpott’s position.

“Well,” said the Squire, smiling, “since you give Hester all the praise, I must follow suit in liberality—and give her half-a-guinea.”

“Will you have your coffee now, father?”

“No—I’ll take my nap first. I feel sleepy. Tell Tom to bring me my coffee in an hour. I don’t like being put out of my usual dinner hour; well, well, never mind. I’ll go to sleep, and wake up in a better humour.”

“Whereupon Adelaide Turrett, having kissed her father on the forehead, left the library.

The hall clock struck four as she did so; and with each stroke of the time-piece her heart beat faster.

For more than four-and-twenty hours she had been in a state of intense excitement; but she had in every respect, whilst observers were present, maintained her customary tranquillity of countenance and demeanour. Something paler than its wont was her cheek; and in her eyes, that fitfully changed expression, when brows and lips were still, an acute reader might have detected pre-occupation of mind; but otherwise there was not a sign of the tumult of emotions that had possessed her heart since her interview with Herbert Andrews.

It was four o'clock. At seven o'clock the tenants were expected to leave the Hollow House. In past times the tenants' dinners were followed by such copious punch-drinking that the entertainments were protracted till near midnight ; but for many years the duration of the carousals had been gradually curtailed, until, with the increase of the present Squire's infirmities, the rule had been established that the after-dinner sittings were to terminate at seven.

For three hours, therefore, Adelaide Turrett felt sure that no one present at the dinner party would stir across the threshold of the house.

The gardeners were concluding their day's work in the green-houses ; the coachman and groom were in the stables ; ' old Tom ' and the other domestic servants had enough attractions within doors to render them indisposed for strolling about the gardens.

The time, therefore, appointed for Miss Turrett's interview with Herbert Andrews was well chosen. Nor, since secrecy was of vital importance, was the appointed spot a less judicious selection. There was (as the reader well knows) a gate opening from the Hollow House garden into the churchyard ; and the churchyard (enclosed by thick yew fence and high trees, so as to be invisible from every window in the parish ;—the windows of the Hollow House having a view only of the church-steeple) was never visited by the villagers, as a lounging place, save on Sundays. Nor was the intrusion of prying clerk or pew-opener to be feared ; for ' old Tom ' officiated in his ' high livery ' as clerk on Sundays, and at the services of marriage or burial occasionally celebrated on week-days,—and the sexton never troubled himself to approach the God's Acre, except in the discharge of his vocation, which, Miss Tur-

rett well knew, would not draw him there that afternoon. Lastly, the only keys to the church were kept under Hollow House custody ;—and with one of them the lady had three hours before turned the lock of the little North door, in readiness for Herbert Andrews.

Putting her garden-hat upon her head, and wrapping herself up in a shawl, Miss Turrett opened the low window of her drawing-room, and having stepped out into the garden, walked quickly across the lawn to the nearest opening of the ‘Long Shrubbery.’ In another minute she entered the church, where Herbert Andrews waited her coming.

“You are here? you are here?” she said quickly—having closed the door, and locked it.

“Of course,—Miss Turrett,” answered the other, bowing to her with the same distant respect, the same humility of bearing, that had characterized his demeanour on the previous day, when he first accosted her in the character of a hawker, and she had decided to encourage him to repeat his visit to the village,—“because you ordered me,—but *only because* you ordered me!”

“Here,” said Miss Turrett, taking a seat on an open sitting in the one aisle of the little church, “sit down by my side. I can stop for a short time only; and yet we have much to say to each other—at least, I have much to say to you.”

Thus invited, Herbert Andrews sat down by her side; but his manner betrayed the same reluctance to assume an appearance of equality with the lady,—the same anxiety not to profit by an influence which he held mysteriously over her,—the same chivalric fear that she should under a generous impulse commit herself to a line of action of which she would

afterwards repent,—the same fixed resolve to force constantly upon her attention the vast gulf dividing him from her—the same reverence for her, and the same abject scorn for himself—which he had manifested at their last interview. That manner was not lost upon the lady. She marked it, appreciated it, and saw in it a declaration—as plain as any he could have made by tongue or pen—to this effect, “Miss Turrett, do not, in consideration of the awful past, condescend to hold other intercourse with me than such as a merciful English lady may hold with a lowly creature to whom she gives alms and counsel. Do not let the grime of my degradation sully the purity of your exalted nature and spotless life. If *you will* hold intercourse with me,—never for a single moment forget who you are, and what I am ; keep ever in your mind the fact that, whilst you are a lady, I am a vile, abject creature, whose proper companions are convicted felons. You *shall* remember this. You *shall not* think of what I was, or might have been. You shall only think of what I *really am*.”

And reading this declaration in his manner, she was keenly touched by the fine, delicate honour that inspired it ; and her heart—generous as the hearts of good women are—was sore troubled by this exhibition of noble feeling on the part of one whom she dared not, if she would,—and could not, if she dared—treat altogether as though he had not fallen from what he was. The more he wished to repel her by his shame, the more was she bent on placing away from her sight all that was worst of his history, and on regarding that only which was best of it.

“Herbert,” she said, as soon as they were seated side by side, with their backs turned towards the window,

through which Carry Bromhead (raised in her father's arms) had on a certain occasion looked into the church, and inspected the monument of Gulielmus de Turribus, "had you wished to make me hold myself aloof from you, treating you with anger as an enemy, or with scorn as a vile thing that even the foot might disdain to tread upon, you should have acted differently,—and have roused the pride and the vindictive temper that still lurk in my breast, by approaching me with familiarity, and claiming my assistance by the power of that title which you have a right to apply to me. But it is too late for you to assume the tone which might yesterday have stung me into repulsing you. Whatever may have been your life since we parted, years ago, in agony and shame,—you are still to me an object of deep commiseration, and—yes, even though I pain you, I will avow it—of faithful affection. I cannot, I *will not*,—believe the evil which the world has said of you, and—would say again. But the fact, of which you so honourably remind me, is one to which I do not shut my eyes;—in this world we must live apart from each other; the hideous past divides us,—that past which has been present to me, every day of my life, since I came to find a home in Castle Hollow;—the dreadful past!"

"Good, generous woman," interposed the man, "do not speak of it—not a word—not a whisper. If you will hold intercourse with me, speak of your own past,—*not mine*. Of me—say nothing, know nothing, ask nothing. Let me be to you only the humble dealer who, never having associated you in former days with this locality, wandered to your door to sell his goods to the Squire's family, totally uninformed of that family's name and history, when he crossed the

garden boundary ;—let me still be the pedlar to whom you extended kind words as well as patronage. Such a one can have had no antecedents a lady should trouble herself about. The present is sad enough ; leave *my* past alone.”

“ But I will speak of my own,” rejoined Adelaide Turrett.

And then folding her hands upon her knees, and looking into the face of that time-worn, subdued, agitated man,—looking at him tenderly, as she had often looked at him when she was a gay, lively, wayward, and romantic girl, and he was young, handsome, reckless, and ambitious—Adelaide Turrett told him the story of her days for twenty-eight years past. A simple story it was, told in touching fashion ; such a story as the reader of the preceding pages could have told. How, after parting with Herbert Andrews in the year 1793, she and the Squire had ceased to live in Fitzgerald Passage, Old Law Quarter, London ; how in that same year of 1793, her uncle Gervase died, and she became the daughter, instead of niece, of the Castle-Hollow Squire ; how, in that same calamitous year of 1793, intelligence reached England of her brother’s death in India—intelligence quickly followed by the announcement of his wife’s death, and of the homeward passage of his infant son, under the care of his Asiatic nurse : how, in due course, that infant heir to Castle-Hollow arrived in England, since which time she had devoted to him the care of maternal love ; how, settling down at Castle Hollow, with her dear father and her nephew, she had, for a quarter of a century, persevered in a career of seclusion,—had led a life of outward tranquillity.

Such was Adelaide Turrett’s story ; but though it was

a narrative prompted by a generous desire to show confidence in her listener,—in the man who was at the same time so widely separated from her, and yet so mysteriously connected with her,—it was a story, marked by one *important reserve*, and embodying a yet more *important untruth*.

Miss Turrett maintained the important reserve, because, had she set it aside, she must either have told her companion another untruth, or have divulged to him the larger portion of that strange, fearful, and complex secret which she and her father hoped to live down. She told that yet more important untruth,—because it was the very garment of that greater portion of the secret which she felt duty to her father, and to Edgar, enjoined her to keep shrouded in the darkness,—in which she and the Squire had enveloped it, and for close upon an entire generation of human life had guarded it.

Far, far better had it been for Edgar, and the Squire, and herself, had she confided yet further in her companion, throwing away all reserve, and having no recourse to untruth! Far, far better had it been for them all, had she and her father, years since, at the birth of their great life-sorrow, boldly resolved to 'live it down,' not in secret, but openly; relying on the sympathy of honest natures, rather than on subtle misrepresentation! Truth is always better in the end than falsehood!

And when she had told her story, she put certain questions to Herbert Andrews, which elicited from him a statement that two months before that present time, he had started out from London (how he came to be in London, how long he had been there, what had been the experience of his 'past,' between 1793 and 1820, he stated

not), with the intention of tramping through the 'light lands,' along the coast to Easthaven,—in the hope of meeting in that seaport town, towards the close of the year, an old friend,—an honest, upright man,—in whose fidelity he could trust, and to whom alone he meant to reveal the fact that he, the convicted felon (whom official papers had long since reported as dead), was alive, and in his native land, having thereby rendered himself liable to the punishment of death, for returning to the country of his birth before the expiration of the term for which he had been transported.

Who might be the old friend to whom Herbert Andrews alluded, Miss Turrett did not inquire. She had secrets enough—far, far too many—of her own to keep.

But she made yet more communications to her companion; telling him that she was already revolving plans how she could aid him in securing some position of life, which, though far beneath that from which he had fallen, might still be one of comfort, and respectability, and usefulness. She told him that, though far from rich, she had at her command a considerable sum of money, which, without rousing the attention of her father or nephew, she could place at his disposal, to enable him to leave his present very humble, very toilsome, and (for him) unalluring vocation. And when she saw that this generous proposal elicited from her hearer a gesture and a look of indignant rejection, she spoke again—with greater precision and firmness—of the *duty* she owed him.

The day, like the one immediately preceding it, had been a bright one, the shades of evening delaying to close it, many minutes after the time, when

Autumn days, at the end of October, are wont to terminate. But when the lady, after once more speaking of *her duty*, rose to bid her companion farewell, daylight had already given way to dusk, and dusk was fast deepening into the gloom of moonless evening.

Quietly she rose from the seat which she had occupied during the interview; and she had made a step in the direction of the door, when, raising her eyes towards the little window above the bench, she started back with an exclamation of affright, and fell against the pews that faced the aisle.

"What is it?" asked Herbert Andrews, in a hoarse whisper, springing to the side of the trembling, terror-stricken woman.

"The window, the window!" she gasped, pointing as she did so.

Following the direction indicated, the man looked up at the window, but saw nothing.

"We have been watched and overheard—watched and overheard," Miss Turrett continued in a low, hollow voice.

"Whom did you see?"

"I saw a man's face looking down upon us."

"A man!"

"Immediately my eyes turned upon him he disappeared. In the dusk I could not distinguish his features, but he had a white face and dark whiskers, a white hat and light overcoat."

"He cannot have overheard us. We spoke too low," answered Herbert Andrews, endeavouring to conceal his agitation, and calm Miss Turrett's fears. "Our voices at no time could have penetrated the window."

"See, see," whispered the lady, clutching her companion by the arm, "there is a broken pane at the bottom of the window, from which all the glass has fallen out. Our secret has transpired. Oh! merciful heavens, another knows it!"

"It has *not* transpired," answered the other, firmly.

"No word of mine revealed it,—no word of yours. All along I have been fearing that your tongue should utter it ;—but, thank God, it did not."

"He heard me address you by your former name."

"The memory of its shame," was the whispered reply, "known only to a few at the time, has long since been forgotten. Miss Turrett, don't be needlessly alarmed. At the worst, our interview has only been witnessed by some inquisitive visitor, or prying farmer, who will be able to make nothing out of any stray words he has caught through a broken pane of glass. Don't lose your courage. Be calm, and wait here; while I go round to the church-yard, and ascertain whether there is any loiterer hanging about to dog your steps."

"No, no," returned Adelaide Turrett, recovering something of her self-possession, "it is too late to take such precautions now. The mischief is effected. Leave the church with me. As soon as you have crossed the threshold of the door, turn to the right, and walk straight out on to the heath. Your pack is here, you have no need to return to the village. Don't be seen in the village again; don't cross the ferry to sleep at Battistow, but go straight out to the heath. Six miles of walking along the cliff will take you to Kerleigh, a small village for fishermen (and for smugglers too, I am afraid). You can rest there. When you get to Easthaven, write to me—write to me. Now let us go quickly."

At the threshold, Herbert Andrews, as he was requested, turned to the right, and walking quickly away had disappeared behind the yew fence, almost before Miss Turrett had turned back the key in the lock of the north door.

With a desperate effort to recover self-composure, Adelaide Turrett, with the church keys in her hand, slowly walked back to the garden of the Hollow House, and crossing the lawn re-entered the drawing-room.

She could not rest there.

Going into the hall she looked about her. The tenants were still over their punch-bowls in the dining-room,—their hats piled up on the large table in the centre of the hall. The number of the hats was the same as the number of the Squire's guests; and (strange to say) there was not a white one amongst them. This fact dispelled the lady's suspicion that one of the Castle Hollow farmers, having left the party in the dining-room, had strolled out for a breath of fresh air into the churchyard, and had been a witness of her secret interview with the hawker.

Who then could have been that unknown observer?

For a few brief minutes Adelaide Turrett tried to entertain the belief that her nerves, roused to intense excitement by the appearance of Herbert Andrews, had rendered her the victim of her own imagination. But she was unable to persuade herself to accept this comfortable explanation of the apparition which had so greatly disturbed her. It could not be that she was the victim of illusion.

Again she put on her hat and shawl, and went out into the garden.

It had become dark, and would have been very dark,

had clouds intervened between the earth and the stars. Deep and unbroken was the gloom in the 'long shrubbery,' up and down the path of which Adelaide Turrett paced, seeking within herself an answer to the question, "Who could that man be?" Though she was far from a timid woman, she became frightened at the few sounds that gave emphasis to the tranquillity and stillness around her. She started at the beating of her own feet on the gravel, at the rustle of her dress, at the twittering of the red leaves as they slowly fell from branches above her to the ground on which she walked, at the bark of a cur that began to yelp in one of the village cottages, at the pulses of her own heart.

Shaking away the terrifying influences that stole over her, she left the shrubbery and the garden, and walking out in the lane made an effort to solve the puzzle.

She walked down the lane to the ferryman's cottage. Accustomed to take evening walks about the parish, when the weather invited her to do so, and accustomed to enter the cottages of her poor neighbours, to whom she was a familiar friend, rather than a lady patroness, she created no great surprise, but only agreeable excitement, when she appeared at the table where the old ferryman, and his son's wife and children were taking their evening meal, by the light of a blazing fire. The ferryman's 'old woman' and only son were absent.

"What a glorious fire you have! It's warm weather for so good a fire—but the blaze is very cheerful!" said Adelaide Turrett, taking a seat that was offered to her by the ferryman.

"It's washing-day, Miss Turrett," answered the woman of the house, "otherwise there wouldn't be such

a blaze. Not that coals are so high and scarce to poor folks here as in some parts."

"No," answered the lady, "Battistow ships bring the coals almost to our doors."

And having thus commenced chat on household topics, Adelaide Turrett went on to discuss 'the washing,'—to inquire if it had been a heavy one, and whether Mrs. Marsh, junior, had got through it all by herself without help; to remark that the day had been a capital one for 'drying,' and in housewifely voice observe that at the Hollow House 'brewing-days' were much 'heavier' than 'washing-days.' Adelaide Turrett was a proficient in the art of gossiping with the poor, without letting them see that their lowly interests and capacities were being condescended to. "A talk with Miss Turrett is just as good as a bottle of physic," the bed-ridden women of the parish often remarked; and in so saying they intended to pay a high compliment to her conversational powers.

Having paid sufficient attention to washing and brewing, Miss Turrett conferred flattering attentions on the children—asking Teddy (ætat. seven) when he would be old enough to ferry folks across the water?—telling little Bessie (ætat. eight) that she had heard how vastly well her 'sampler' was being worked; on which intimation, of course Bessie's sampler was brought out of its box for display,—whereupon the blushing artist received sweet praise for industry and neatness, and the lady, having given a glowing description of a sampler she herself worked when she was just Bessie's age, concluded her remarks on sampler manufacture by putting a silver sixpence into Bessie's box—enjoining her to spend half that great sum on sweetmeats for her-

self and brother and sister, and lay out the other half in needles and cotton.

Hitherto, Adelaide Turrett's special courtesies to the ferryman had been confined to thanking him for the chair he placed for her, and to inquiring after his rheumatism, which malady, in Mr. Marsh's case, varied between the three degrees—'bad as ever,' 'very bad,' and 'awful bad.' But now she turned to the master of the cabin, and began to talk with him.

"Busy, to-day, Mr. Marsh?" inquired the lady.

"Well, not so *very* busy, Miss Turrett—a little going on—but not so much; but I should well like a little more."

"The 'parson's boat' went over this morning—I saw you taking Mr. Greaves over one way; and I suppose you had to take him back again?"

"Yes, my lady—and two or three came over towards the afternoon, for the Squire's dinner."

"Ah!—it has been quite a grand day at the House!—Then you've had no strangers?"

"Haigh, yes—that I have, Miss Turrett," cried the old man, suddenly becoming animated, and raising his voice to a shrill key, "and he gave me all the pence in his pocket, which were five of 'em."

"Indeed! was he a gentleman?"

"Oh, surely, Miss Turrett," answered the veteran with a canny smile on his bronzed face,—“at least, he paid me like one.”

"Who was he, Mr. Marsh? I'm not above hearing the news."

"Well, my lady, I should say he's one of these new sporting gentlemen—who go scrying about in white hats and drab coats."

"He wore a white hat, then?"

Old Marsh nodded; and then—after a pause for reflection—added, “But his whiskers are black enough—and big enough! Take my word for that, Miss Turrett.”

“He’s a stranger in these parts, Miss Turrett,” put in the ferryman’s daughter-in-law, feeling that the time had arrived when it was incumbent upon her to take part in so interesting a discussion. “I was up town” (*i. e.* at Battistow) “yesterday, in the afternoon, when I saw the gentleman drive into the ‘Green Eaglet’ yard, my lady—in one of them light, cut-away, crazy-looking gigs which gentlemen drive now-a-days—and haven’t no room to stow away a bag of potatoes in, if it was to save the linch-pins from dropping out.”

“The gentleman had a beautiful horse, mother,” put in Bessie, with much gravity.

“It isn’t the horse that puts me out o’ temper with him, child. It’s the gig,” replied Mrs. Marsh, junior, with asperity. “Only to think, Miss Turrett—two wheels and a pair of shafts (to say nothing of dash-board), and ne’er a bit of room—for such a thing as a bag of potatoes!”

“But how did you come to see the gentleman’s horse, Bessie?” inquired Adelaide Turrett. “Did you go up town with your mother?”

“Oh, no, Miss Turrett,” responded Mrs. Marsh, junior, snatching up the right of reply from under her daughter’s nose, “the gentleman brought his horse and his ridiculous gig down to the water-side, and as there was no one handy on t’other bank, Miss, to hold the gentleman’s horse, father-in-law came back for me to stand by the horse—which is a quiet, docile beast enough—though it was a bit sp’rity when the gentleman got into the gig, on going off.”

"Ay—to be sure;—and Bessie went over to keep you company?"

"And Teddy, too, Miss Turrett," returned the loquacious Mrs. Marsh. "Though it had been a washing day, my spirit was up;—so Teddy, and Bessie, and I all made just a little 'outing' of it. We all got into the boat, and father-in-law took us over. 'Why, you've brought all the family over to take care of my horse,' says the gentleman, with a laugh. And then he went over, and after prying and srying about the village for more than an hour, he came over back to us—when it was well nigh dark. Teddy, and Bessie, and I were all of us getting cold, and out of temper with the job, when father-in-law and the gentleman came back. But the gentleman gave me a shilling, Miss,—that he did! Whoever he may be, he pays like a gentleman. But I've no patience with his gig."

"So, Miss Turrett," said Bessie, at last contriving to put in a word, "we all got back again; and we had not been down to supper ten minutes when you come."

"I declare, you have been quite gay," exclaimed the visitor to the Marsh family. "Is this what you call having only a little business, Mr. Marsh? I am afraid you're going to turn as great a grumbler as I am. But I mayn't stop here. I must be off. Good night, Mr. Marsh; and good night, Mrs. Marsh. I can find my way down the path into the lane, Bessie;—don't trouble to bring a light."

But little Teddy Marsh (ætat. seven) did not intend to let 'the lady' depart in peace, until he had first made a display of scholarship that was highly creditable to a young gentleman of his years.

The display was thus effected.

"Please, Miss Turrett," said Teddy, slowly, stam-

mering with excitement, "I know the gentleman's name."

"Bless me, child," exclaimed Mrs. Marsh, junior, at the top of her voice, "how should you know the gentleman's name, seeing he never told it to you? I never knew such a wicked, naughty boy as you are for telling unconscionables,—never; and I have half a mind to send you to bed without a bit more supper. Oh, Miss Turrett, that boy does say such things! Only yesterday night week it was,—he was looking at the moon, and he said, 'Mother, I should like to drag it down into this cottage!' 'Don't talk such nonsense!' says I. 'It's no nonsense, mother,' says he, 'for if I had a long rope with one of grandfather's little anchors at the end of it, I could throw the anchor into the moon, and pull it down,—at least, I could if I was a little stronger.' Oh, Miss Turrett, that boy will be the death of me! He's as uncanny as a dunted sheep!—and yet, he's a right nice lad!"

"Leave Teddy alone, daughter-in-law," cried Mr. Marsh, who was inordinately proud of his grandson's attainments and parts. "Speak up, Teddy;—what's the gentleman's name?"

"It's a very strange, queer name," said Teddy slowly, stammering worse as he became more brilliant—"there never was such a strange name for such a gentleman."

"There, Miss Turrett!" put in Mrs. Marsh, almost goaded to madness by her son's eccentric conduct, "that's exactly what the boy is—when he's worst! It isn't enough for him to hold out that he knows the gentleman's name, when he doesn't; but he must needs go and have queer notions about it—though he doesn't know it any more than you do."

"His first name is 'Alec,'—I never saw a name like that before; it doesn't mean anything. And his next name is 'Barber'—which is a very strange name for a gentleman with such large whiskers. And he's a 'farmer.' And he lives at 'Little Deane'—which is near 'Easthaven.' There! And I read it all off the back of the gig, while Bessie was loving the horse, and mother was scolding the gig."

"Haigh!—lad!" cried the ferryman, with intense delight, "here's a penny. Good boy! Miss Turrett,—ain't he a boy?"

"Alexander Barber, Farmer, Little Deane, near Easthaven," observed Adelaide Turrett, putting the disjointed pieces of Teddy's valuable information together.

"Oh, Alec, then is short for Alexander," observed Teddy;—and then he added triumphantly, "And now, mother, didn't I know the gentleman's name?"

"It doesn't follow, child," severely responded Mrs. Marsh, "that because the name is on the gig, it is therefore the gentleman's. The gig doesn't need belong to the gentleman. Perhaps he hired it—or borrowed it—or stole it; or, for the matter of that, child, seeing what a useless made thing it is, without room even for a bag of potatoes, it's quite fair for us to suppose that—the gentleman found it without an owner."

Adelaide Turrett did not stop to decide which of Mrs. Marsh's suggestions was the most in accordance with the probabilities and possibilities of life. She had heard enough,—far more than she had expected to hear.

Once more bidding the ferryman's household 'good night,' she retraced her steps to the Hollow House; and as she walked quickly along the lane, it seemed

to her as if some one followed close behind her heels, and whispered in her ear—"Alexander Barber, Farmer, Little Deane, near Easthaven."

When the party in the dining-room had broken up, and the tenants had all taken their departure, Adelaide Turrett joined her father in the library. But he would not stay there; he was restless and fidgety,—slightly querulous, moreover, at having been put out of his ways—with early dinner, and speechifying, and his nap at the wrong hour; he would be led to the drawing-room, and sit there (as on the previous evening) listening to his child's music? Would she play to him? Would she sing to him?

"Yes, yes;—his child would do anything to make her dear father comfortable and happy."

So, having conducted him to his customary seat in the drawing-room, she sat down at the piano once again, and sang to him ballads—popular half a century since; other ballads—popular when George the Third was a beardless boy; and one quaint old-world love-song, which the Squire admired beyond all other compositions of the kind, as it was the first song he had ever heard his wife (Adelaide's mother) warble to the harpsichord—in that Christmas vacation, long, long ago, when he came down from London to the Hollow House, and won the girl whom brother Gervase loved so loyally. That last song the Squire *encored*; and when Adelaide had complied with his request, he besought her, in a lower tone of voice, to play the same pieces from Beethoven that she had played the evening before.

And patiently Adelaide did his will; the Squire, meanwhile, little imagining how much, how cruelly he was taxing her powers.

No tears tonight rolled down her patient face as the solemn melodies filled the room. No, not a single tear!

No wonder there was need next day to summon Dr. Magnum to the Hollow House.

CHAPTER IX.

AT HOME AND ON THE TRAMP.

A THIRD lovely day for the close of October—with a warm sun shining in the blue sky, dotted and patched here and there with small white clouds, that were driven landwards from the sea by a stronger and keener breeze than any that had blown over the 'light lands' for weeks;—a breeze heralding the advent of rough weather to those who, like Mr. Marsh, the ferryman, were prescient in atmospheric affairs. "Play away, little uns—for there'll be an end o' summer-like play for you to-morrow—or the next day, at the latest," said the ferryman, as he sat at his cottage-door, with wistful eyes on the Battistow side of the river—looking out for a job.

The Squire was ill at ease, sitting in his library, and grumbling at 'old Tom' because the 'tenants' dinner' had disagreed with him (the grumbler). Mid-day dinners always disagreed with him, he maintained; he was a stupid old fool, to have had the party when his blindness gave him a good excuse for relin-

quishing the ancient usage of the house ; he shouldn't be well again for a fortnight. But the veteran attributed his discontent to a wrong cause. The fact was, Adelaide Turrett, instead of appearing at the time appointed by custom to lead him out in the grounds for his walk, had sent a message by Hannah, excusing herself from attendance, on the score that she was suffering from so bad a head-ache. Hannah added that her mistress hoped she should be well enough to ride in the afternoon. But this intimation didn't allay the concern and irritability with which the Squire received the intelligence ; he was alarmed at the announcement of his child's indisposition, ill-pleased at losing the pleasure of another garden-walk with her, and petulant at being 'put out of his way.' He was for sending off a messenger forthwith to Merton-Piggott, with a summons for Dr. Magnum ; but Hannah successfully combated this proposal, by stating outright that her mistress would be displeased at such attention to her ailment, and by suggesting that it would be quite time enough, two or three hours hence, to decide if medical assistance ought to be had recourse to. So the Squire, having sent up an affectionate reply to his daughter, ordered 'Tom' to lead him about the grounds. But the two men did not get on at all well in their excursion to the shrubberies and green-houses ; and, after blowing up his attendant for his disgraceful ignorance of the names of exotic plants, Squire Antony returned to the solitude of his library—puttering and fussing in most unphilosophic ill-humour.

His discontent would have taken another form had he known how ill his daughter had been—had he known that she had twice attempted in vain to get through the labour of her

toilet,—having, on the second occasion, fainted away into the arms of the faithful Hannah, who fortunately restored her mistress to consciousness, without alarming another member of the household.

At noon, being still unable to quit her bed-room, Adelaide Turrett again dispatched her maid to the Squire, informing him that “as she didn’t feel well enough to ride, or even to rise, that afternoon, she should like the pleasure of half an hour’s chat with him, if he would come to her bedside.” Upon receiving which message the master of the house permitted himself to be led up-stairs by Hannah, and in due course was placed in an easy chair, where he could sit, holding the invalid’s hand. Adelaide had fortified herself for the interview with a resolution to go through it bravely—as though the presence of her beloved father was something to be endured and struggled under, not to be rejoiced at. Strange to say, she dreaded his approach;—trembled as she heard his feeble step on the stairs—even as, many, many long years before, she had trembled and longed to shrink away from him and herself, and all the world, when his tread (firm and unfaltering then) had ascended the narrow staircase of their old home in Fitzgerald Passage, Old Law Quarter, London, on that dreadful evening when she communicated to him the dreadful secret he had shared with her ever since;—on that dreadful evening when (having heard that dreadful secret) he kneeled down by her sick-bed, putting his arm gently under her neck, and having kissed her tenderly, whilst the tears fell fast from his eyes (not blind then, but glowing with divine affection and pity), said, in solemn, healing, God-like tone, “Child, I have never loved thee as I do now—now that thou art in such need of me. How couldst thou dread my anger, when

I have no feeling for thee but commiseration and strong love? Child, do not die! Thou must live to comfort and gladden thy father."

All testiness and asperity vanished from the old Squire's voice and manner as soon as he approached his daughter's bed. Gentle, and loyal, and devoted as she remembered him to have been on that far-away evening in her quiet chamber in Fitzgerald Passage,—just so gentle, and loyal, and devoted was he now, pressing her hand to his lips with old-world courtier-like tenderness, and then laying it down upon the coverlet of her bed as though it were some holy emblem lent to him for a brief space for services of worship! And yet she shrunk from him; for again, after so many years during which their mutual confidence and love had known no reserve or cloud of distrust, she had a secret which she dared not tell him! How she thanked God that he was blind, and could not watch her traitorous face!

"Don't be frightened, or even uneasy about me," said Adelaide, when she and the old man had with little success endeavoured to chat on ordinary topics. "I have only a slight feverish cold. I was out too late in the garden last night, and caught a chill. I must be more prudent. We shall have our ride to-morrow. But leave me now, dear, for I want to sleep."

Whereat the Squire rose, and took her hand to give it a parting salute; but as he did so, the strong resolution with which Adelaide had fortified herself for the interview failed her, and the Squire knew by the nerves of his hand that she was trembling with extreme agitation.

"Child, child, don't deceive me," said the old man quickly, putting his hand upon her face, "it's a mistaken tenderness. And you are weeping, and shivering."

"It's only the chill, father, it's only the chill," an-

swered the daughter, "it's not so bad as it was in the morning. Don't, don't be frightened."

But the Squire was very frightened, and it was useless for Adelaide to implore him not to be so. He insisted that Dr. Magnum should be sent for immediately; and Hannah coming into the room joined in the Squire's entreaty with such effect, that Adelaide Turrett, powerless to hold out against them, gave reluctant consent to have the physician called to her. She could not tell them that her malady was beyond the art of medicine.

So Hannah led the Squire down again to the library.

And the groom was sent over to Merton-Piggott for the doctor.

A lovely day for the close of October, with a warm sun shining through the thin fleecy clouds, that, driven landwards from the sea by the stronger and keener breeze, heralded the approach of rough weather.

Throughout that day (whilst Adelaide Turrett lay in her sick-bed, conjuring up scenes of disaster for those whom she most dearly loved, but never imagining for them worse troubles than those which in due course were to follow from the events of the two preceding days), Herbert Andrews, *alias* William Newton, hawker of books and stationery, walked over moor and heath, from Kerleigh (the smuggling and fishing village where he had passed the night) to the interior of the 'light lands.' His object was to get upon the turnpike road that leads from Merton-Piggott to Easthaven, whither he had been bound, before encountering Adelaide Turrett; and with this object, he walked on at the steady marching pace of one accustomed to the tramp, stopping nowhere except for purposes of rest and refreshment

Thinly populated as the region was, he nevertheless came upon farmsteads, standing out in hard lines and sharp angles, without a tree to shelter them from winter and spring winds—upon isolated shepherd's huts, thrown down in the solitudes of pathless sheep-walks,—upon small villages inhabited by humblest tillers of the soil. The dwellings of the farmers he avoided; in the villages he abstained from offering his wares for sale; but twice during the morning he obtained a mug of water at a shepherd's hut, and permission from the shepherd's good wife to eat of the food, which he carried in his knapsack, at her table. More than one of the two score persons he encountered on his march from the sea to the high-road, wondered what the silent pedlar was after, that he neither pressed them to become his customers, nor invited them to gossip.

But no observer of the hawker's onward course thought of him when once he had passed out of sight. Why should idle gazers trouble themselves about a churlish pedlar, who gave them neither greeting smooth, nor greeting rough? What could there be in such a one worthy a second consideration? The course of the day would, in all probability, bring them another packman, who would 'border with them,' prating of the town he had last quitted, of the houses he had that day entered, of the flocks whose tinkling bells he had that morning encountered on the downs and reaches? Let a man with ne'er a word in his mouth pass on with ne'er a blessing! And the idle gazers consoled themselves with muttering the proverb, "A silent tongue drives a poor trade," and then straightway forgot the man who had provoked the criticism.

Had they known all that the reader knows, curiosity

would have prompted them to put many a question about the stranger. How had he commenced the battle of life? How had he fallen at the outset? To what end was he still struggling? Was he of gentle birth? Had he, in the hot blood of impetuous youth, drawn upon a companion in quarrel, and struck a blow that brought him to disgrace and punishment? Had he, when a lad, started with high ambition and slender fortunes, and, after a brief attempt to win honourable distinction by honourable exertion, had he relinquished toil for which he had not sufficient endurance, and followed after pleasures luring him to defeat? Had he, like many a young man of fair promise and honest nurture, at the whisperings of vanity and the prickings of discontent, made slight deflections from the narrow path of duty?—and never returning to it, had he gone on imperceptibly, gradually, steadily, till he found himself burdened with debt, and fettered by the consequences of wrong acts which, at the time of their committal, he laughed at as mere pleasant indiscretions? With honour tarnished, and resolution weakened, had he lacked courage and strength to retrieve himself, and falling lower in dishonour and sin been seduced, at a moment of fear and excitement and utter weakness, into an act that carried him to the degradation side of the line which human laws draw between private immorality and public crime? Above all, what was his connection with the gentle lady of the ‘Hollow House,’ that after years of separation,—years that had furrowed his cheek and bowed his form,—she, setting aside the wide barrier between her own goodness and his ignominy, could still address him with words of comfort, and pity, and affection?

The sun was falling down into the west, the shadows

were falling in longer lines athwart sandy lanes, the clouds were coming up thicker from the sea, and the dusk was creeping up from dells, and pits, and wayside trenches—when the hawker, after traversing three or four miles of richer land (soil for the most part brought under the plough), set foot on the Easthaven turnpike road, just as a light gig, containing a man and woman, was passing in the direction of Easthaven. Between the shafts of the gig was a high-blooded brown horse, that bore marks of rapid travelling. The driver, who was allowing his beast to walk for a brief space, and get breath before another burst of fast trotting, was a man of the middle size—slightly but still strongly built, with the remains of good looks in an aquiline, keen-eyed visage, and with black whiskers ('shaggy, dissipated whiskers' Carry Bromhead would have called them), causing his bloodless complexion to look whiter than it really was.

"Is Shoreham to the right or the left, sir?" inquired the hawker.

"Neither," answered the driver of the brown horse, "it's straight before me."

"Then it's to *my* right."

"I never said it wasn't—I am talking about myself. Next time you ask a gentleman the road, don't think about your own right and left,—but his right and left. Where are your manners? Wasn't the extra twopence paid for you?"

The gentleman with the eagle visage, and foxy eyes, and dissipated whiskers did not make this reply in an angry voice, though he spoke sharply and quickly; for, instead of driving on, he stopped his horse to parley with the tramp. Taking his white hat off his head, he drew from his pocket a red silk handkerchief, and proceeded

to dust his pale face. That operation performed to his satisfaction, he returned the kerchief to its pocket, and asked his new acquaintance if he had any mince-pies for sale in his pack. It was clear that the gentleman prided himself on his quickness and smartness, that he deemed himself a humourist, that it was his custom to 'be down on all men like a needle.'

Taking no notice, beyond a smile, of the demand for mince-pies, the hawker replied that he dealt in stationery, and should be happy to sell his questioner a new pocket-diary, with a patent clasp, and containing two hundred leaves. The hawker had sold many such diaries to sporting gentlemen who used them for betting-books.

"I dare say you have, you smooth-tongued impostor!" answered the other. "Don't try to gammon me. You must rise to-morrow morning to take a man like me in. I was suckled at King's Heath, and sent to college at the 'Seven Dials,' I tell you. So now, try it on again, and get as good as you take. But still, it's something in your favour that you aren't selling hymn-books. So down with your pack, and show us what you've got. My missus, here, would like sixpenny'orth o' sermons. She was a rope-dancer, but she married me some years since, on the sly, and that converted her from the her evil ways."

A long day of loneliness had at length made the hawker wish for society. So he opened his pack readily, not for the sake of the few pence, but for sake of the opportunity which traffic would afford him of exchanging words with a human voice.

"Well," said the gentleman, with a touch of enthusiasm, when he had turned over the leaves of the diary, "I am a fool to tell you so, but this is an uncommon good book. Talk of literature!—what book of poetry

or fiction is equal to a betting-book ? Take it how you like,—it's the very essence of life ! Take it bran-new before there's been a line put in it,—you may think of the strange stories that will go into it, marked down in short-hand ! Take it when its used up,—you may think of all the flats and fools it has helped to ruin ! What do you want for it ?”

“Two shillings and sixpence.”

“You're a modest man. Why don't you drive your carriage ? Your trade is a good one.”

“That's the price,—I wont take a penny less.”

“Take off sixpence, and I'll give you the two shillings, and a twist of whipcord I've got in my pocket.”

“I don't want whipcord, sir. A rope might be more useful to me.”

“Then,” said the gentleman, with an emphatic expression, commencing with the letter ‘d,’ for which expression there was no need whatever, “I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll toss you for it—double or quits ! Come now” (emphatic expression repeated).

“I'll toss you,” said the hawker, “if, supposing I lose the toss, the lady will buy a shillingworth of paper of me.”

“A bargain,” cried the other. “I must have the book, but I wont pay for it on the square. I never have paid for anything yet on the square, and I never will. When I die, I'll order my executor to buy my coffin off the square. He shall get it on the bend, somehow or other” (emphatic expression again needlessly interjected). “He shall pay for the wood and toss up for the lining,—or deduct for nails and throw in a lot of old metal. Come, here's a half-crown,—one toss decides,—and I'll toss.”

"No," answered the hawker, "you shan't toss."

"You don't like the look of me?"

"I have met worse-looking men."

"Come, now," rejoined the other, evidently not at all displeased at being taken for a rogue, "I see you're up to the time o' morning; and I think it's most probable that if you had let me toss, you'd have lost by the transaction. But how shall we settle it? You're a bigger rascal than I am, till you get a horse and gig like mine."

"The lady shall toss. Let her spin the half-crown up into the air, and before it falls upon the road I'll call."

"Good."

Whereupon the lady, with a sad smile on her face, as if she would fain appear amused, but still did not derive much pleasure from her husband's playfulness, sent up the coin.

"Well spun, by Jove," exclaimed the husband, with approval. "You've played at chuck-farthing."

"Head!" cried the hawker.

"And" (emphatic expression employed once more) "so it is. You've won. You may have a beefsteak for supper. Give us the book. Take the half-crown; and there's another to add to it."

"Thank you, sir,—thank you, ma'am."

"Are you lucky?" inquired the loser.

"Lucky!—I lucky?—not much of that!" answered the other, with a tone of sad significance.

"Oh! you're not lucky—I am."

"Take care to keep your luck then. Luck slips away sometimes from the luckiest, when they most need it."

"That's what my poor brother found out at last."

"Indeed!"

"Ay! that he did, you may believe me. Shall I tell you how it was?"

Herbert Andrews was silent, for he saw from the expression in the speaker's face, that he was about to make another display of humour.

"I come of a lucky family," continued the man. "My father was a lucky man; and he had three sons besides myself, and they were all lucky. The brother I am going to tell you about was, like me, always for doing things off the square. He was always betting, except when he was tossing, or going in for some kind of chance. 'Boy,' says my mother to him, 'one day you'll chance it once too often.' And she was just right, and no mistake about it, was the old woman. But he had a fine run of luck first; and that's as much as any man can expect. Well, just as he was rising thirty-five year, things went against him, and he thought it best for society in general, and himself in particular, that he should pay America a visit. That he did. So he took ship and was off, without stopping to call in his accounts, or pack up the family name. 'Mr. Absalom Chance' is what he was entered in the ship's books. Well, it was a bad voyage, the vessel was wrecked, and the crew and passengers were forced to put off in the boats, leaving the ship to go to the bottom. So there was a scramble to get into the bigger and tighter o' the two boats. 'Let's draw lots to see who is to have the better craft,' says Mr. Absalom Chance. And they drew lots, when *of course* my brother drew into the strongest boat. Well, after they'd been out in the open sea for ten days, without just any victuals but their own boots, they took counsel together and agreed to eat each other. 'Good,' says my brother, 'let's draw lots

to see who's to be eaten first.' And they drew lots, and be hanged if the lot didn't fall upon Mr. Absalom Chance to be served up first, and so my poor brother——"

"Was eaten!" put in Herbert Andrews, who, although he of course discerned the story to be a fabrication made on the spur of the moment, was interested as well as offended by the narrator's ghastly humour.

"No, you're just out there," returned the other, coming down upon him like a needle, "just as they were about to do for him, they came in sight of land; and so they spared him. And he's now the first merchant in the city of Boston.—Next time, old fellow, you meet a man of my size, don't you try to pick the meat out of his nuts till he has cracked them for you. And now, as soon as you have told me your name, I'll go."

"My name?" answered Herbert Andrews, who had been long enough in the 'light lands' to catch up one piece of local humour, "I am the last surviving trustee of the Blownorton Clock."

"Thank you," responded the other politely, "you sell me a trumpery pocket-book, you win half-a-crown of me, you try to spoil one of my best stories, and now you cut up rough, because I ask you for your name. It'll take a long time to fatten you up into a decent member of society. Thank you!"

"I am William Newton, hawker, at your service," answered Herbert Andrews, feeling perhaps that his last speech had been needlessly discourteous. "Would you like to see my license?"

"No, I thank you," replied the man ironically, "I'll take your word for it. You look so honest! So, good evening to you, William Newton! and better manners to you, William Newton!"

And thus saying, he touched his horse lightly with his whip; and the high-spirited creature, springing at once to a gallop, took the light gig and its occupants out of sight in a couple of minutes.

"I didn't want to give that lantern-jawed thief," mildly observed the driver to his companion, as he pulled his horse from the gallop into the trot, when he had left William Newton far behind—"I didn't want to give that lantern-jawed thief time enough to read my name on the back of my gig. I *would* have that advantage over him."

But the speaker congratulated himself on a purely imaginary success; for rapidly as the horse and gig sped over the ground, and uncertain though the dusky light was, William Newton had both time enough and light enough to read, on the back of the vehicle, the words, "Alec Barber, Farmer, Little Deane, near East-haven."

"Have you ever seen him before?" inquired the companion, who was no other than Christina Barber, on her way, with her husband, from Merton-Piggott to Little Deane.

"Why should you think I've seen him before?" returned Alec Barber, coming down upon his wife like a needle, now that he hadn't the hawker to make descents upon.

"You wouldn't have spoken to him so long if you had not had some object in view; and what concern could you have with a hawker you had never seen before?" replied Christina frankly, and with feigned cheerfulness of voice.

"Very good, Mrs. Barber!" returned the husband with a contemptuous tone of mock approval. "For a woman, a very good answer! Well, I *have* seen him

before, and I wished to look at the shape of his face, so that I may know it when he takes to shaving his beard—as I have no doubt he will one day; and I wished to learn the colour of his eyes, before he takes to hide them under green glasses—as I have no doubt he will one of these days.”

“You’re a sharp fellow, Alec,” observed Christina.

“Thank you, Mrs. Barber. You ought to know; for you’ve seen a little of me.”

“And you have a wonderful memory for faces!”

“Thank you again, Mrs. Barber. I haven’t a five-pound note about me; but if you want a new dress and bonnet, you may go to Easthaven for a rig-out next market day.”

“Thank you, Alec,” replied Christina, shutting her eyes to the insolence of her husband’s manner, “I shan’t want fine dresses, now I am going to lead the life of a farmer’s wife. When I make feigned love to you now, it’ll be to wheedle a new cow out of your savings, or get leave to keep more poultry. But tell me where have you seen that man before?”

“Oh, I’ve seen him at more places than one, tramping about the country. I believe he’s an honest, money-making fellow. We shall see him keeping a fine shop somewhere one of these days,” said the husband, in a careless tone, not wishing to communicate to Christina the circumstances of the only occasion on which he had beheld William Newton before that afternoon.

From which it may be presumed that there did not exist between Mr. Alec Barber and his wife that perfect confidence which gives happiness to the lives of all the married couples who read these pages.

While Mr. Alec Barber was thus driving his wife towards Little Deane, near Easthaven, ever and again

coming down upon her like a needle, and always on the look-out lest she should circumvent him, and learn too much of his proceedings, Herbert Andrews, *alias* William Newton, was slowly marching on to Shoreham, where he intended to take up his quarters for the night. And as he proceeded with lagging, wearied limbs, faint and foot-sore, he said to himself several times, "Mr. Alexander Barber, Farmer, of Little Deane, near Easthaven,—supposing that's the man's name—is a rascal, or I never saw one. His eyes were set in their sockets by the Father of Evil, or I am neither hawker nor escaped—well, well, it's safer not to say the word. What a quick-tongued knave he is! But his wife is of another sort. She sat there without speaking scarce a word; but a good woman is known by her looks. They're an ill-matched pair!"

The time was not far distant when it delighted Mr. Andrews, *alias* Newton, to recall how, at that first roadside interview, he had come to the conclusion that Christina was a good woman, and Alec Barber a rascal.

CHAPTER X.

A NEW THOUGHT FOR CARRY.

DR. MAGNUM was not slow to perceive that exposure to the chill air of an autumn evening was not the cause of Miss Turrett's illness. His inquiries after the first signs of her indisposition, and his acute observation of the febrile symptoms that marked her case, resulted in his saying: "I can give you sleep by means of drugs; and in a few days I shall administer to you a newly discovered agent, which, before many years have passed, will drive bark-powder and bark-decoctions out of the apothecary's shop. By such instruments I can soothe you, and put you in the right way to gain strength. But my art will be of little avail so long as grief and unrest hold possession of your mind. I am not your father confessor; and if I knew the cause of your mental trouble, I most likely should be unable to dissipate or weaken it. So I don't ask for secrets you wish to keep to yourself. But the best medical council I can give you—is advice that you take

the most cheerful view possible of the circumstances that distress you."

"Dear doctor," gently answered Adelaide Turrett, not attempting to deceive her physician, "you are quite right. I am ill in mind. Help me with kind words, and be patient with me, and I shall soon be cheerful again. You have known me suffer in this way before."

"Yes, yes; it's not the first occasion on which my prescription for you has been a brief homily," rejoined the doctor, smiling.

"A sorrowing heart can be no rare spectacle to you. Perhaps it is best that it should be so. If God did not lower us sometimes with troubles, He could not raise us up with His consolations; and His mercies are much more precious than His punishments are fearful. I will be a docile patient; but—but——"

"I must be very careful to make light of your illness to Mr. Turrett and Edgar; and above all things, I must be studious to hide from them that the mind, and not the body, is the seat of the mischief? That is what your 'but' means? Rely on me, Miss Turrett. Rely on me. Mine is not a silent tongue; but it is closer than most tongues that are slow to speak."

Whereupon Adelaide Turrett, to show the entire confidence she had in the physician whose delicate sympathy and consideration had befriended her in many periods of darkness, offered him her hand to press, saying simply: "You're a good man, dear doctor. Goodness is better than great riches. I would rather lead your life of merciful industry than be the most powerful lady in the land." And after a pause she added:—"You'll soon see me much better. When you have been here to speak with me a few times

more, I shall drive over to Merton-Piggott. Don't shake your head so,—weak as I am, I think the change would do me good ; but I shouldn't care to make the journey there and back in the same day till I am quite strong."

"If you really wish for a few days' change," rejoined the doctor, who saw that Adelaide's last words had been spoken with an object, "come and stay at Bassingbourne House. Fanny will be delighted to receive you."

To which invitation the invalid said that she would think about it ; that she should like to sleep a few nights at Merton-Piggott ; that the doctor might give a hint to her father that change of air would be good for her ; that if she decided on paying Fanny a visit, she should like to do so at the Squire's suggestion, who would be sure to propose the plan, if Dr. Magnum would lead him to think of it as an advisable arrangement.

Of course this intimation was enough for the physician. After bidding his patient farewell, he stepped into the library for ten minutes' chat with the Squire, when he concluded his report of Adelaide's case by saying, "She ought to have change, Mr. Turrett,—not excitement, but quiet diversion. Just put it into her mind that she would like to come over to Merton-Piggott for ten days or so. Fanny, of course, will sing for joy at the prospect of receiving her. Edgar will be back in a day or two from King's Heath ; and then he must do duty—taking you about for your walks and rides, while his aunt is making holiday."

"Pshaw !" exclaimed the Squire, in a tone of lively distress. "She's overworked. Of course, she is. I have been exacting too much from her. Oh, dear doctor, it's want of eyes, not want of heart that has made me do it."

"No, no," responded the physician, wishing his workmanship to be without a defect. "She isn't over-worked, but only in that delicate and excitable condition in which sensitive women very frequently are at this season of the year. I don't tell you she wants rest, but that she needs diversion."

Having thus executed the commission with which Adelaide had honoured him, the doctor hastened to his carriage, and was soon upon his way to another house, where his presence was required to give ease to troubled minds, as well as health to sick bodies. "Something has gone wrong in the Hollow House,—that's clear!" observed Dr. Magnum to himself, as he lay back in his chariot. "I have seen her depressed and harassed many a time; but I have never known her so deeply affected on any previous occasion. It's clear Mr. Turrett has no suspicion what is the matter; and she enjoined me with her last words to speak of her illness as a mere trifle to Edgar. What can it be? I hope Edgar hasn't been getting into trouble. He can't have been fool enough to have lost a fortune on 'Cormorant' and 'Ringbell' at King's Heath,—where so many betting men have just been tumbled over. No, no,—he isn't fool enough to bet and gamble beyond his means. But I do wish he would get free from those noisy fellows at King's Heath and in the 'corn-country,' with whom he spends a confounded deal too much time. It was all very well, twenty or thirty years since, for a young country Squire to devote himself to sport. But times are changing; and a young man, with breeding, and brains, and education, ought to be able to change with them. And I hope Edgar will change with them. If he doesn't, Carry Bromhead's fortune will do him no good; and he'll not have so good a position in the county, ten

years hence, as his grandfather—old age, and blindness, and mortgages notwithstanding—enjoys at the present time. I don't like the furious way in which the youngster swaggers about fighting the rector on his own ground. Edgar Turrett—who *is* a gentleman, notwithstanding his tolerance towards the blackguards and riff-raff of provincial race-courses—ought to know that 'the cloth' are never, under any provocation whatever, to be fought on their own ground. He ought to know that in civilized society the course of a gentleman is to leave all men to take their own ways—and to smile at them, not fight them. My philosophy mayn't be a very high one ; but it wears well."

The seed which the doctor had sown in the unsuspecting Squire's breast sprung up and bore fruit. On Edgar's return from King's Heath, the first intelligence communicated to him by his grandfather was that Aunt Adelaide needed change of air and scene, and would, as soon as she had got the better of her trifling indisposition, go over to Merton-Piggott, and pass a few days at Bassingbourne House. Indeed the amiable old man was greatly pleased with what he termed his plan for the invalid's complete restoration ; and he was not easy until, one dull morning in the second week of November, he stood at the hall door of the Hollow House, and gave his benediction to the ancient coach (first brought, span-new, and blazoned with arms and quarterings, to the family mansion of the Turretts, on his mother's wedding-day) as, with Tom in 'high livery' behind, it rolled down the garden drive under leafless branches, on its way to Merton-Piggott, whither Miss Turrett was bound for the sojourn—which she had arranged for herself. Adelaide Turrett was neither the first nor the worst woman to achieve an end of her

own, whilst appearing to comply with the will of another.

Had health been her principal object in visiting Merton-Piggott, she could not have taken a course more likely to conduct her to it. In Fanny Magnum's cheerful drawing-room, overlooking Abbey Place, she had the society of her hostess, and of Carry Bromhead, whose winning ways and pretty face had taken close hold of the affections of the woman who was, in all respects save the title, Edgar's mother. There was also 'little Fan,' dancing into and out of the room, with music in her voice, and perpetual sun-light in her eyes. John Bromhead and Martha also came in to pay their respects to the visitor who, in different ways, liked the merchant and his wife scarcely less than she loved their daughter. Martha's sad face and plaintive voice neither wearied nor repelled her new friend, as they did the more censorious ladies of 'the persuasion.' On Sunday Adelaide was well enough to attend both morning and afternoon service at St. Mary's Church, and instead of finding anything to take exception against in Mr. Reeve's eloquent and fervent appeals to his congregation, she came away greatly delighted with them. She was sure Mr. Reeve was a good man, and wished she could listen to him frequently.

"I am very, very glad—oh! very glad," said Carry earnestly, as she walked home with Aunt Adelaide from the afternoon's service, and was told how much her companion approved the sermon and its preacher.

"Why should you be so very glad, Carry?" asked the elder lady, with a smile.

"Edgar cannot bear him."

"And is that the reason you like to hear me praise him? It's a strange reason!"

"No, no, dear—it isn't that exactly," answered the girl, turning a bright face up to Edgar's aunt,—“only now, you'll help me to make Edgar soften to him. Do help me. It would be so much happier for me, and him, and all of us, if Edgar would like him. Since Mr. Reeve has been here, papa and mamma not only let me attend St. Mary's, but they have several times attended the afternoon service themselves; and they like him very much—even more than I do. Papa says that if such clergymen as Mr. Reeve had come earlier into the Church, there would never have been any 'persuasion—to divide people against each other—at least, he should not have joined the 'persuasion;' and I almost think (though certainly she is very reserved, and I know very little about her) that mamma would like always to attend St. Mary's—and leave off going to Mr. Bicker's chapel.”

“Have you ever said this to Edgar, darling?”

“Yes, yes. But he does not like to hear Mr. Reeve's name mentioned with praise, or even with forbearance. He is angry with him for spoiling the society of the town, and setting his face against gaiety. And yet there are more important things than assembly balls and county races, which religious men must care for. But I don't dare to tell Edgar so, for directly Mr. Reeve's name is mentioned a cloud comes over his face; and even if he doesn't say anything, I tremble.”

“My child,” returned Aunt Adelaide, in a voice that was only little above a whisper (for this conversation passed in the public ways), “be patient—be patient, and Edgar will come to your way of thinking.”

“Oh, do you indeed think so?” inquired the

girl, the gladness of a new hope beaming in her face.

"He has been brought up to follow the pleasures of old 'light-land' life—the 'old life' that is now vanishing before the new ways of a new generation; and he is pained at witnessing the change, and unjust to those who are bringing it about."

"No, he isn't unjust," put in Carry, not liking to hear even Edgar's aunt apply such a harsh but most appropriate word to him. "He only sees things from a different point to Mr. Reeve. Oh, how I wish we could all see things alike!"

"It is better for us as it is," returned Aunt Adelaide, meekly. And after a pause she added, "Darling, I am very glad you have spoken thus to me. I love you better for what you've said. When you are once Edgar's wife, he will be a very good man."

"But he is a very good man now," said Carry, coming closer to the side of her companion.

These last words were uttered at the steps of Bassingbourne House, where Carry parted from her companion, and walked back to Gray Street to early tea, thinking, as she went, upon the unconsidered words she had just spoken to Aunt Adelaide; thinking if aught disloyal to Edgar had escaped her lips; thinking if the time would ever come when Edgar, besides being a *very good man*, would be a *very religious man*—like Mr. Reeve. What gladness would there have been in the girl's heart, if she could have persuaded herself that that day would come!

The conversation, which terminated for the time at the doorsteps of Bassingbourne House, was more than once renewed by Aunt Adelaide and Carry; and delicate and even dangerous though its subject was, it was a source of comfort and satisfaction to both speakers;

and the two women were not only drawn closer to each other by their talk, but loved Edgar yet the more for it.

"My beautiful girl!" said Aunt Adelaide, on the last occasion of their recurrence to Edgar's dislike of Mr. Reeve, "it isn't mother's love only I feel for you. It's profound gratitude;—I know no other name to call it by."

"Gratitude?—to me?" said Carry, with surprise and pleasure.

"Yes, gratitude," answered the other, with tears in her eyes; "gratitude, such as a mother might feel for the preserver of an only child! Darling, I was never strong; and causes, which you, I trust, will never hear of, have made me more delicate than I should otherwise have been. Life isn't as strong in me as it was a few years back; and though I make no noise about my apprehensions, I think you'll see that ere long I shall gently go away from you, and we shall see each other no more till we meet in heaven. If that time comes before the close of the year, I shall pass to another world knowing that I leave you behind me—to lead Edgar up to that everlasting home where joy is unbroken and loving hearts are no more divided."

Much as Carry had for months wished that Edgar would be *religious* as well *good*, she had never before looked upon herself as one whose appointed task it was to raise him to that higher life. Though not devoid of the elements from which self-dependence is formed, she was a genuinely humble-minded girl, slow to oppose her own will to that of others, diffident of her own powers, and ready, with docile pliancy of disposition, to conform herself to the

opinions of her companions. She had never entertained the ambition to influence her associates. Living all her life long with seniors, she had without inquiry embraced their thoughts, and aimed at pleasing them. She had been the musical echo of her admired friend Fanny Magnum, and the plaything solace of a father who, by somewhat unusual circumstances, was to a great extent shut out from the society of his equals in education and wealth. To her reserved mother she had always been a dutiful and obedient child; and when she was led into loving Edgar, she was more anxious to please than to rule him. At times she would, indeed, laugh about the trouble she would have "to tame him down into a peaceable member of society;" but in her heart she wished to guide her steps in accordance with his words. To such a girl Aunt Adelaide said, "I leave you behind me—to lead Edgar up to that everlasting home where joy is unbroken, and loving hearts are no more divided."

As Adelaide Turrett thus spoke in simple fashion, and with low, earnest voice, it did not occur to Carry to ask how it came that her companion (a woman broken in health, and long past the period at which the young deem the affections to be most active) cherished such deep, fervent love for Edgar,—love that declared itself by mute signs not less than by spoken words,—love so widely different from the merely tender regard which maiden aunts usually entertain for their brothers' children. Only one brief moment of regret and pity did the girl bestow on her friend's announcement that failing strength had forewarned her that the close of her earthly life was not far distant. The thought which took possession of Carry's mind, excluding from it every other consideration, was the thought em-

bodied in the last words of Aunt Adelaide's pathetic address.

Often, often, after that interview,—in the clear brightness of day, and the still darkness of night,—were those words to be heard again by Carry; when no one was nigh to speak them,—when the gentle voice that first fashioned them was silent,—to this world, silent for ever! Steadily, stealthily—even as decay follows the strong, and Time preys on beauty—days of blackest gloom were coming over Carry's path (hitherto cloudless, and without a care), when stretching her hands upwards to the Heavens, where the unseen angels sit in glory, she would cry out in anguish, “I cannot lead him to you! I am blind, and weak, and helpless myself! I cannot lead him to you. It would be sin in me to try to lead him to you.”

CHAPTER XII.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH :—FAITHFUL AFTER DEATH.

BUT health was not the sole object of Adelaide Turrett's visit to Merton-Piggott.

She had business there, which she wished to transact unobserved by her ordinary acquaintance.

Besides sending daily reports of her progress to Castle Hollow, in notes addressed to her father, she wrote two long letters to a correspondent, her intercourse with whom she wished to be known to as few people as possible ; and these letters she posted herself, so that Dr. Magnum's servants might not see their direction. But the writing of these letters was part only of her secret business. In all, she stayed ten days at Merton-Piggott ; and on the seventh of those ten days, she found means to leave Bassingbourne House, without attracting the attention of its inmates, and make a visit to the bank, of which Mr. Stephen Dowse was chief agent,—for the wide and important district of the 'light lands.'

Passing through the outer office of the bank, the lady

entered the inner parlour, where the bank-agent was accustomed to receive clients who wished to speak with him privately. Farmers, whose accounts at the bank were on 'the wrong side,' and necessitous tradesmen, who were compelled to borrow small sums on special agreements, were wont to speak of this room jocosely as 'Stephen Dowse's sweating-room,' since they never entered it without mental perturbation. But 'the quality' who banked at Stephen Dowse's bank (known, as the reader may remember, by the title of 'Crab-tree, Scuttle, & Co.')

used to walk into the parlour for the transaction of mere trifling business,—when they presented small cheques for cash, or made unimportant additions to their accounts.

Miss Turrett's appearance, therefore, in the bank parlour (where, to her satisfaction, she found the agent sitting in solitude) of itself created no astonishment in the mind of Stephen Dowse. The lady had often been there before. During her residence at Castle Hollow, the Squire (though he had a narrow income for his station) had persisted in giving her, upon each quarter-day, a sum of money which far exceeded what she required for her dress, and charities, and other personal expenses. She had more than once advised her father to curtail this liberal allowance; but he as often had declined to act upon her counsel, and on the last occasion when she expressed reluctance to take so much money from his purse, had said significantly—"No, no, Adelaide. Take your allowance, and go on adding to your hoard at the bank. There's *some one* dear to both of us, who may one day get into a young man's scrape which you may like to help him out of, without troubling me." The *some one*, thus alluded to, was then a noisy lad at the Merton-Piggott Grammar School. But the

delicate consideration thus shown for Adelaide Turrett by her father missed its chief end; for Edgar, though he had expensive pleasures at Cambridge, and (after leaving Cambridge) in 'the light lands,' had always managed his affairs so well, that he had never stumbled into a pecuniary difficulty. Aunt Adelaide's fund had therefore gone on increasing, until it was an important sum. Since Edgar's engagement, she had decided that 'the hoard' should be in some way expended to add to the splendour of the approaching alliance,—and be a memorial of the satisfaction she took in it. Since Carry would bring a large fortune to the Hollow House, she—as an heiress—ought to be welcomed by the Turretts with a suitable offering of precious stones and jewels. Thus thought the old Squire's daughter; and innocent of worldly pride though she was, a glow of exultation came to the cheek of the gentle lady when the thought occurred to her that she would lay out her money in diamonds (diamonds treasured in a casket which should be inscribed 'Aunt Adelaide's Casket'), and present them to Edgar's bride on her wedding-day. If she should not herself live to see the wedding-day, the gift should still be made,—and it would be sweeter and more sacred, the donor being dead—to gratitude and ingratitude alike. And then exultation gave way to softer emotion. But the simple creature was still happy in her heart, thinking how, in the far-off, happy future, women of her family—delicate, beautiful, gracious, meek towards Heaven, generous towards the world—would have the bright gems! and how, before they left their mirrors for ball or concert, they would mirthfully press the empty casket to their fresh pink lips, and say, "Bless you, dear Aunt Adelaide!"

But that pleasant dream had already been laid aside ; and Adelaide Turrett was about to dispose of her money in another manner.

Taking a seat which Mr. Stephen Dowse placed for her, Miss Turrett took pen in hand, and having written upon a slip of paper handed it to the agent.

Mr. Dowse was too old a man of business to manifest surprise. With a stolid expression of countenance he read the figures on the cheque, and then inquired in official tone how the lady would take it.

"In notes,—£100 notes, if you please."

"Our notes, Miss Turrett?"

"No, Mr. Dowse, Bank of England notes. They must be Bank of England notes. Smaller ones will suit me as well, if it would be more convenient to you that I should take them ; but I do not wish for country notes."

"No inconvenience in the matter to me, Miss Turrett. I'll bring them instantly."

"Thank you."

Mr. Dowse went into the office for two or three minutes, and then returning, placed twelve notes for £100 each before the lady.

"Shall I make them into a packet for you?" inquired the agent, when Adelaide had counted them.

"No, I thank you, I'll put them in my pocket-book."

"As you please, Miss Turrett, but if you are going to send them anywhere, they'd better be done up securely."

"Thank you for the caution, sir."

These words having passed between the two, Miss Turrett rose, and left the parlour.

"By Cræsus !" muttered the agent to himself, using

an oath appropriate to his vocation, as soon as the lady had walked down the steps of the bank-door, "that's a clean sweep, and done as quietly as if she had been drawing twelve hundred pounds every day for the last twenty years, instead of depositing that sum, *minus* interest, by small instalments, quarter after quarter. No words about it either. Would have Bank of England notes!" (nodding his head sagaciously); "exactly,—not so likely to be traced. Wouldn't have country notes!—they would be traced to a dead certainty! Exactly, exactly, I see. Too proud to tell a woman's fib about making a profitable investment. Of course. The whole of her family are chuck full of pride, with all their smooth ways. Investment indeed! Stephen Dowse comes of a sharp family,—the Dowses have always been able to see farther through a brick wall than most of their neighbours, and it doesn't trouble Stephen Dowse to see how that *money* is going to be *invested*. Master Hopeful, whom my cousin's canting husband is so proud of having caught for his stuck-up, pert little chit of a daughter, is going to *invest* it for her. Ah! ha! Um! um! That's what comes of racketing about the country at horse-races and steeple-chases, and every other sort of blackguardism. I said I'd find him out before long, and Stephen Dowse, when he means to find a man out, usually *does* find him out." (Indignantly). "But what a black-dyed, rascally scamp the young fellow must be, to strip, fleece, skin in that fashion an old maid aunt who, to my knowledge, has no other provision! He's not the only fool and rascal who lost money last King's Heath meeting on 'Cormorant' and 'Ringbell;' but I am willing to lose my wits, if a more heartless fool, or a meaner-spirited rascal, can be found in all the world.

This will be a nice little dose of bitters for Master John Bromhead,—*Probity* Bromhead! It'll just take the bitter of some of his insolent speeches to me out of my mouth, and lay it back on his own tongue. I hope he'll like it. Ta! ta! ta! But I shan't tell *Probity* Bromhead yet, no, not yet. The pear isn't quite ripe. We'll wait awhile, for something more to turn up. Stephen Dowse doesn't bark till he can bite."

While Mr. Stephen Dowse was thus meditating with malevolent satisfaction on the construction which he put on the withdrawal of Miss Turrett's money from his keeping, that lady directed her steps to the Abbey Gardens, where she took (invalid though she was) much walking exercise to and fro, and up and down, and in and out of the intricate walks of those lovely grounds, which of course in that season of the year did not look at their best.

With the exception of three gardeners, Miss Turrett was the only person in the garden when she first entered. For months past it had been little frequented by the townspeople, 'the quality,' since Archdeacon Lovegrove's departure from the rectory, having relinquished their old custom of lounging and sauntering upon its terraces at least once in every four-and-twenty hours. Indeed, during the summer months there were often not twelve people to be seen in the 'grand walk' at 'promenade.'

It seemed that Miss Turrett was bent on exercise rather than society, for when a man of middle age chanced to walk into the gardens, she only surveyed him carefully for twenty seconds, whilst he passed under the gate-way,—and then turning in another direction, went into the avenue at the back of the ornamental enclosure.

In less than five minutes however the man also entered the avenue, and raising his hat, accosted Miss Turrett.

"I feared it was not you,—I—I was not sure it was you," she said quickly.

"I am glad to hear you say so," was the answer, made in a low voice. "Since you found it difficult to recognise me, although you expected to meet me, no one will recognise my old self."

He was a man of middle age, but nearer sixty than fifty years old, slight in form, and with drooping shoulders. His thin, long face had neither whiskers nor beard, and his grizzled hair was cropped short. A high hat, a long coat and trowsers of black cloth (the latter garments were still not generally worn in the 'light lands' by men of his age) composed his outward apparel; and his eyes were concealed by spectacles of tinted glass. A staid, grave person, of gentlemanlike exterior and composed address, he was qualified in respect of appearance to pass as friend of her whom he addressed.

"I thank you—very, very much,—and very, very gratefully for your last letter. The concession," said Adelaide, "made in it to my wishes has taken a heavy burden from my heart. You applied the term 'generous' to me, in its last sentence! The generosity is yours. Let us say no more, however, of our correspondence, or of its subject. Take this,—and with it my deepest, warmest thanks for the permission which enables me to present it to you. Keep the case; don't part with that. Keep it in memory of me. I have put a lock of my grey hair in it; the last lock I gave you had no white threads."

With these words, Adelaide gave the man her pocket-book, containing the notes she had just before received from Mr. Dowse.

"Miss Turrett," replied the man, taking the gift, "I will add no word to what I have written. You know what I feel,—and what I have resolved! There will be no change in me, in aught that concerns us two. Oh, Miss Turrett, may God protect you, and bless all who are dear to you!

His voice was gentle and subdued; but no tones could have added more force to his few words.

"One thing," said the lady, "before we part for the last time in this world. You ought to know it. I know who watched us when we were in the church. The spy was a man named Alexander Barber,—a person of no good repute. My nephew wishes to think well of him, and means to befriend him—because he has married a young woman, an actress, whom Edgar saved from death, when her dress caught fire at the theatre of this town."

"You are *sure* that he was the man?"

"Certain,—certain. Have no doubt as to the fact. On that same evening when he played the spy on us, he drove from Castle Hollow to this town, where his wife, to whom he had been secretly married for years, was recovering from the accident of the fire; and the next day he took her home with him to Little Deane, near Easthaven."

"Exactly."

"Why do you say 'exactly' in that voice?"

"Oh, nothing,—just nothing," lightly answered the man, whom the reader has already recognised as Herbert Andrews, *alias* William Newton. "It's only this; I have a good memory for names, and I remember that a gig, containing a man and woman, which passed me that same day on the Easthaven Road (about two miles

this side of Shoreham), bore the name and address you have just mentioned. The man must have been Alexander Barber, and the woman must have been his wife.—She was a well-looking, almost handsome woman.”

“For her condition of life, she is a very superior woman. As a well-conducted and clever actress she had much attention paid to her in this town, where her uncle—the manager of the theatre—has been for many years greatly respected.”

“Indeed! Then she is a niece of the old actor, Shakespeare Wylie. I have heard the country-people talk about him.”

“His niece,” answered Adelaide Turrett,—“the child of his only sister.”

There was a movement of surprise on the part of Herbert Andrews; but the movement was so slight that it escaped his companion’s notice.

“I am glad you have told me this,” he observed with calmness. “Since Alexander Barber saw us in the church, I will avoid his company, if he should ever come across my path.”

For a minute neither Adelaide Turrett nor Herbert Andrews spoke.

They were about to part for ever; and to each of them the anticipation of this parting for ever was a source of pain and embarrassment.

“Herbert,” said Adelaide, bravely putting an end to the embarrassment, “we will stay here no longer; to linger would be useless. May God bless you! I will not utter a word of entreaty, that would imply a fear for the safety of our secret,—as far as you are concerned. I have perfect confidence in you! I will not inquire what your plan of life is,

where you mean to find a home, what name you intend to bear. It is better that I should not ask,—should not know. Go out into the wide world, and again be lost to me. I shall return now to the Hollow House, to be my dear father's companion,—and wait patiently for the end,—the end which a voice of comfort—a voice that has no terror—assures me is not far distant. Those who without dreading the grave are convinced that it is steadily drawing nigh,—those who apprehend the approach of death, as I do,—are never deceived. When I shall be no more, if you visit Castle Hollow, you will see upon my memorial stone these words, 'Faithful unto Death; Faithful after Death.' Dear, dear Herbert, those last words, 'Faithful after Death,' will be placed there for you to read,—that, reading them, you may look forward with joy and confidence to our union in another and brighter world, where there will be no shame for us to bury under falsehood,—no sorrow for us to live down."

For the first time during the interview, Herbert addressed her by her Christian name.

Taking her right hand in his, he said in broken voice, and with slow utterance, "Adelaide, those words shall give me hope. I, too, will be faithful unto death. Oh, that God would permit the last days of my wretched life to be marked by some service that might prove my fidelity to you,—some act that might atone in a small degree for the suffering I have brought upon you, and show that my love was loyal to you at the first, and, unchanged by degradation and time, was loyal to the last."

Twice he kissed her hand fervently.

Then Adelaide Turrett, having once again spoken those words of sacred hope—"Faithful after Death,"—

turned away from him with one last, long look, eloquent of love that, unshaken, undiminished, had outlived years of anguish and hidden shame.

Leaving him in the quiet avenue, she retraced her steps across the Abbey Garden and Abbey Place, to Bassingbourne House, where, having entered her private room, she fell upon her knees, and poured out the sorrow of her soul to the Almighty Father of the utterly weak.

CHAPTER XII.

OLD FRIENDS.

AFTER Adelaide Turrett left him in the avenue, Herbert Andrews remained in the Abbey Gardens for some hours. He saw John Bromhead, and Stephen Dowse, Richard Camberwell and his wife, Mr. Bicker and other grave towns-people take the 'early promenade' in the 'Grand Walk.' He saw the nursemaids and children of the pleasant borough come out for exercise on the lawns; and as he watched the little ones at play, and heard their prattle, he thought sadly of his own far distant childhood,—thought how his days had passed in hardship and degradation, unalleviated by the joys of home. The children regarded the grave, demure stranger curiously and wistfully, as children are accustomed to scan unknown faces; but the older people took no notice of him, beyond a careless observation of his person, and a careless conjecture that he was a traveller waiting to take coach for another place. It was no rare occurrence for a stranger to make his appearance in the grounds;

as the landlords of the principal hotels were under certain conditions empowered to give their guests 'passes,' admitting them to the grounds.

This careless conjecture was a right one.

When the 'Shannon coach' started from the 'Melford Arms,' the grave, demure gentleman climbed to the roof, and was carried away into the wide, wide world, in the direction of Easthaven, which sea-port town of the 'light lands' he had resolved to visit.

The turnpike road was not unknown to the passenger. He had observed its features before—the width of the hill-less way, in which six carriages might have been driven side by side; the wide margins of close fine turf, on which gipsies [encamped, and packmen sat down for rest; the trackless reaches of sheep-walk over which the sea-wind blew merrily; the country houses skirted with woods and plantations, raised by artificial means, at great cost; the tranquil villages nestling in the hollows of the downs; the round-towered churches standing out from the horizon; the sleepy little towns, where idlers lounged at inn-doors, waiting to 'see the coach change horses'; the flocks of sheep scrubbling over the grass on either side of the road, with bells tinkling and dogs barking, on their way to fair, or market, or distant pasture; the corner of fen-land, where, looking to the left and away from the sea, the Easthaven-bound traveller saw, as far as eye could reach, a dusky level, meted out into rectangular allotments by walls, and dikes, and dotted with craggy, toppling ghosts of wind-mills, ineffectually pumping away 'the curse of too much water'; the richer soil and smaller enclosures, and greater proportion of arable land—as the way drew nearer and nearer to the chief port of the 'light lands.'

It was dark when the grave, demure traveller arrived in Easthaven ; but the landlord of the hotel where the coach left him (to proceed on its way to Sedgehassock, to meet at midnight the London-bound 'mail') informed him that there was plenty of time for dinner, before the theatre opened. Herbert Andrews, on entering the coffee-room, had inquired the news of the town ; and on being told that the players were in the place, and would perform 'Macbeth' that same evening, had expressed his intention to visit the playhouse.

Dinner over, Herbert Andrews, after leisurely enjoying a cigar and a tumbler of grog, put on his hat and great-coat, and walked through the bustling streets of the town, and in due course found himself amongst Mr. Shakespeare Wylie's supporters.

The numbers in the house made it evident that 'the quality' of Easthaven had not yet seen right to discountenance the drama. When Herbert Andrews took his seat in the upper tier of boxes, where the public were permitted to enter in ordinary walking costume, he found the pit crowded with tradesmen and their families, the Mayor with the Mistress Mayoress and the Mayoral children in the state-box, and the 'beaux' and 'belles' of the town in the dress circle,—whilst the gallery was densely packed with blue-shirted sailors and their lasses.

The curtain had been drawn up for the second act of the tragedy, when Herbert Andrews was paying for his admission, and scarcely had he seated himself in the last vacant seat of the upper tier, when Mr. Shakespeare Wylie, assuming the attitude of a person about to pursue a butterfly through a garden, made inquiry—

"Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle towards my hand?"

and went through the magnificent speech in which those words occur, with more violence of gesture and intonation than the taste of this critical generation would approve. But, however faulty the actor's rendering of the passage may have been, his art won the approval of his 'house.' As the tragedian's hollow voice enunciated the lines—

“Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell,”

the sailors in the gallery screamed down on the favourite actor, ‘Bravo, little un,’ ‘Give him another,’ ‘Hurroar,’ ‘Again,’ whilst the occupants of the pit stamped on the floor and clapped their hands, and the gentlemen in the dress-circle cried ‘*encore*.’ It was customary in the ‘light land’ theatres for “the house” to *encore* speeches as well as songs; and, on the present occasion the enthusiasm was so vociferous that the manager (having first acknowledged the praise with a profound bow) wiped his forehead with his pocket handkerchief, and once again made ready to follow a butterfly over beds of roses.

When the performance was over, Herbert Andrews waited at the door of the theatre till ‘the house’ had dispersed, and check-takers and actors had hurried off to their lodgings and ale-house suppers.

The last person to leave the theatre was the manager, who, having seen the lights extinguished and chests locked, bade the custodian of the theatre good night, and walked up Ocean Street in the direction of his lodgings.

“Good,” observed Herbert Andrews, to himself, “he is not going to any supper-party. He is on his way home to bed. I’ll speak to him to-night.”

Keeping in the wake of the manager, Herbert Andrews followed him to the door of a house situated in a new street on the outskirts of the town, and accosted him whilst he was fumbling in his waistcoat pocket for his latch-key.

"Good night to you, Mr. Wylie," said Herbert Andrews.

"Sir," responded the manager, drawing himself up to the fulness of his modest stature, and touching his forehead with his latch-key, "I have the honour to wish you a very good night. May no wicked dreams abuse your curtained sleep!"

"I have, sir," continued Herbert Andrews, speaking slowly, "followed you from the theatre, where I have been a witness of your magnificent representation of 'Macbeth,' and all the time during which I have tracked your steps, I have been endeavouring to overcome diffidence and reserve, and address you. When I tell you that I have this day journeyed by coach from Merton-Piggott, for the sole purpose of seeing and hearing you act—you will accept my apology for thus intruding on you, and allow me to introduce myself to you as—Mr. Braddock."

"My dear sir," returned the actor, whose vanity made him appreciate the compliment at something more than its real worth, "there is no need to make an apology for flattering courtesy. Homage is not less sweet to the old than to the young; for myself, I care more for plaudits even of the vulgar, than when long since in the days of youthful ambition I believed myself destined to occupy a higher position in my profession—than it has been my fortune to attain. It fills me with proud emotion, my good sir, to find that my popularity in this district of the kingdom, in which I have laboured

for more than a quarter of a century, is powerful enough to induce a gentleman of dramatic tastes to take so long a journey for the purpose of witnessing my humble efforts. Sir, the old actor whom you thus honour is about to partake of a solitary and frugal meal before he retires to rest. If you will condescend to share his humble repast, you will be welcome. We shall be alone."

This invitation being the particular card which Herbert Andrews wished the actor to play, he responded to it with thanks and prompt acceptance; whereupon the manager opened the door, and admitted his guest into a narrow and dark passage, where he grandiloquently asked him to wait until he had procured a light.

In less than a minute, Mr. Shakespeare Wylie returned to the passage, candle in hand, and led his visitor into the front parlour. The house had only two rooms on the ground floor; and as the guest followed his entertainer into the front parlour, he saw through an open door that the room at the back of the house was unoccupied. "Good!" thought Herbert Andrews. "As long as we speak in a low voice, we shall not be overheard."

"If my ear did not play me false, my dear sir," observed Mr. Shakespeare Wylie, when he had seen his guest take possession of the easiest chair in the room, "you informed me that I have the honour of addressing Mr. Braddock."

"John Braddock, sir—at your service."

"Braddock! Braddock! possibly you are of the same family as the distinguished General Braddock who fell in America—fighting for his king and country?"

"I am not aware of any such connection, sir. I am a tradesman, Mr. Wylie—a tradesman recently settled at Sedgehassock, where the chief theatre of your circuit is fixed. Indeed, I trust you will be one of my customers, as you have for many years been a customer of the shop and business which I have just taken."

"Indeed, indeed, my dear sir."

"You are doubtless aware that Mr. Carley, the bookseller and stationer at the Butter Market, Sedgehassock, is dead?"

"True, true; and you, sir, have taken his business?"

"I have bought the good-will and stock of Mr. Carley's widow. It is my intention to continue the printing department of the concern, and I hope you will let my journeyman print your bills."

For a minute Mr. Shakespeare Wylie would have preferred that his guest had been of higher condition. Having admitted him to his supper-table, under the impression that he was a patron of the drama, and a member of provincial 'quality,' the manager was not altogether pleased to find that he was only a tradesman. But Mr. Wylie was too well-bred and kindly an old man to permit this transient dissatisfaction to be apparent.

So the supper passed off pleasantly, enlivened with talk about Edmund Kean and Mrs. Siddons, and gossip about such younger members of the dramatic profession as Mr. Macready and Miss Stephens.

Supper over, Mr. Wylie lit his pipe, having first induced Mr. Braddock to take a churchwarden, and smoke also.

Then it was, while the manager lying back in his chair, was enjoying the first whiffs and smoke-curls of

his pipe, that Herbert Andrews, *alias* William Newton, *alias* John Braddock, proceeded to astonish his host.

"Much as I desired the pleasure of seeing you in the character of Macbeth, Mr. Wylie, I had another object in journeying to this town."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I had another object for seeking an interview with you, Mr. Wylie."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I have another object in now speaking with you."

"My best attention is with you, sir."

"I want to make inquiries of you—inquiries to which I shall best lead up, by recalling to your mind certain events that influenced your career thirty years since—thirty years since, more or less."

Mr. Shakespeare Wylie turned uneasily in his chair, as his guest thus quietly informed him that he meant to speak of events connected with his (Mr. Wylie's) career thirty years since. The manager had always been an upright, honest, well-intentioned man; he had never done a deed for which he had cause to blush with shame; but all the same for that, he did not relish the assurance that occurrences of his past life were about to be recounted to him by one who an hour before was an entire stranger to him. Any gentleman of spotless reputation would feel uneasy in such a position. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury would be perturbed if a stranger, whom he had just entertained at a quiet *tête-a-tête* meal, were to put a pipe in his mouth, send a cloud of smoke up to the ceiling of the dining-room at Addington Park, and say: "Now, my Lord, I wish you to sit quietly in your chair, while I talk to you about

certain events that influenced your career twenty years since—twenty years since, more or less.”

“Sir,” replied Mr. Wylie, laying down his pipe on the table, “I repeat—my best attention is with you.”

“Go on smoking,” observed the other, coolly.

“Sir, I shall *not* go on smoking,” returned the manager, emphatically.

“Very good, I shall ; your ‘shag’ is very good. But I will not keep you in suspense.”

“Thirty years since—not *less*, but rather *more*—you were an actor at the Covent Garden Theatre. I believe I am not mistaken. If I am mistaken, tell me so, for I wish to be set right wherever I make a mistake. I will speak slowly, and in distinct propositions, leaving time between them for you to dissent or assent to each. It will spare us time and trouble, and possibly pain, if you will correct me at once whenever I am wrong.”

“I was an actor at the Covent Garden Theatre at the time you mention,” said the manager.

“Thank you. The parts assigned to you were humble parts ; and your pay was very small ?”

“I admit it. I was then in a very humble condition.”

“At that time you lived with your only sister in a poor lodging in Cosmo Court, Drury Lane?”

“I did.”

“Your sister was a young girl, much younger than yourself, and she did her best to contribute to your narrow means by the exercise of her needle? You loved her very dearly? I know you did.”

The manager waved his hand, and said in a low, husky voice : “Go on.”

Laying his pipe down on the table, close beside the

other churchwarden pipe which the manager had put aside, John Braddock continued his examination.

"She was a very lovely, gentle girl? Her beauty would have made her fortune on the stage; but she was gentle, retiring, diffident? She had not nerve to be an actress; so she was forced to work with her needle, whilst you were so poor?"

"Why speak of her?" inquired the old actor, in a low, tremulous voice. "She's in heaven."

"Ay; but her child lives?"

"Every one who knows me, knows that."

"Poor as you then were," continued John Braddock, "and insignificant as the parts assigned to you then were, you nevertheless had a friend who recognised your talent, and who sympathized with your troubles? He was much younger than yourself, was only three years older than your sister; and, when you first made his acquaintance in a coffee-house frequented by poor actors, he was of a social condition superior to your own?—Am I right?"

"I know to whom you allude."

"This lad, this lad—he was no more than two-and-twenty when you first knew him—was your intimate friend? When you first knew him he had an income of a few hundreds, and was living in chambers in the Temple? Well-looking, keen-witted, with some education, and the bearing of gentility (though, Heaven knows, his extraction was not one to be reflected on with pride), he was living about town with other young men—his superiors in rank and fortune? His name was Herbert Andrews?—It is necessary for me to go through all these particulars."

"Herbert Andrews is dead also. What of him?"

"When you had known him a few months, he found

his way into your lodgings in Cosmo Court, and saw your sister? Soon he loved her, and she loved him? When you first became aware of the fact you were disturbed, for you did not think a Templar, living with gay young men of the Inns of Law, would condescend to marry the poor sempstress? But he did marry her; and before marrying, he took you into his confidence, and told you his strange history—that far from being a young gentleman of condition, he was the son of a man who had for years past defied the laws of his country—that he dared not bear his own father's name? In short, he was the offspring of that notorious smuggler, Captain Damont, who, notwithstanding his success in his lawless vocation, was ultimately so poor, that, before he came to suffer for his wrongs, he was ruined in purse, not less than in reputation?"

John Braddock paused, waiting for an answer from his listener; but no word of agreement or dissent was uttered by the manager, who, leaning forwards in his chair, was intently scanning the face of the stranger who thus addressed him.

"He married your sister; but they lived together only ten months,—for when she had given birth to her only child, God took her in his arms to heaven? When she died, her child was brought up by a nurse in the country—a relation of your own, named Morris? Herbert Andrews and you still remained good friends; but you saw less of him? The poverty of his wretched father's last years compelled Herbert Andrews to live the life of an adventurer? He had not sufficient strength of purpose to withdraw himself from the idle, wealthy friends whose acquaintance he had formed by social qualities which—as the conduct of the world proved—were attractive? The secret of his birth was known to

no one except yourself; and you did not suspect how poor he was at the time of your sister's death? Vain, reckless, ambitious, he lived for awhile (though no one suspected it at the time) by what he could win with cards and dice, from young men richer than himself, but less experienced in the ways of the town? While you were slowly working on as actor, he was living in society to which—though it could scarcely be called fashionable—he would never have been admitted had his real history been known? His life was hateful to him; but he went on in it with a gambler's hope that some turn of fortune would enable him, sooner or later, to enter on an honourable career? Free to marry again, he possibly cherished the hope, common to vain young men in desperate circumstances, that he might marry a lady whose wealth or influence would open to him a field for worthy effort? But instead of this turn of good fortune he fell to—lower degradation?—Did he not?"

"He was innocent! He swore it to me!" gasped the actor, trembling violently, as he rose from his seat and resumed it again, whilst John Braddock kept his eye steadily fixed upon him.

"Did he? Very likely. But what faith do you put in the word of a convicted felon? Placed on his trial for a capital offence, he was found guilty. His sentence was commuted to transportation for life. Before he left his native country (on the very day when your sister had been dead three years), doomed to perpetual servitude—doomed to perpetual slavery for life, when he was only twenty-six years old—you saw him in his prison, and promised to fill a father's place to your sister's child—*his* child? 'Never tell her of her father's shame. I shall live it down in anguish and toil; but never let her know it,' were the wretched man's last words to you. Did he say those words to you?"

"Go on—go on—don't torture me," cried the actor, raising an arm that shook as though it was palsied.

"The felon was sent to Australia ; but he had not endured three years of his sentence, when he and a party of his fellow-convicts made a bold attempt to escape from their keepers. There was an affray. Some of the wretches were recaptured, some were shot down as they fled, a few managed to effect their purpose, and escaped.—In the official report Herbert Andrews was put down as killed. But he escaped ;—and has at length returned to his native land."

At these last words the actor started to his feet, and took a quick step to the speaker.

"Keep off, keep off," cried the man, waving the actor back ;—and then, when the manager had sunk down upon his seat, he continued, lowering his voice till its tremulous accents seemed those of a woman making confession, rather than of a man telling the anguish of his stern life : "For years the felon dared not return to his native land ; he dared not brave the death appointed to felons who come back from transportation before their term of sentence has expired ; it was not the risk of the death that he feared, so much as the risk of bringing fresh pain and shame on those who still thought tenderly of him. For years he lived abroad, hoping to reconcile himself to perpetual banishment ; but he could not so resign himself. At length he came back to his country. He did not forthwith seek out the one old friend in whose fidelity he could trust ; of whose tenderness he could be secure. His wish was only to breathe English air, to live where, even at a distance and unknown, he might hear how that friend was living,—might learn if his child was happy. But the longer he kept away from him and her, the more he yearned to see them,—to

listen to their voices,—to touch them. It is now months—not years, only months—since he said ‘I will walk out from London through the peaceful counties, into that wild, waste coast-land where my wretched father’s name is still a by-word on lawless lips ; and I will wait about there till I find courage to make myself known to the one man, of all the friends of my early days, who wouldn’t shun me on recognising me.’—Keep back, Wylie—keep back for one minute ! Let me speak it all.—I walked down into the ‘light lands,’ when the yellow corn was in the fields, and birds were singing in the autumn sun, and pure breezes came blowing from the sea, rushing through the wooded slips with the roar of waterfalls, and whispering over the open wolds like harp-music, speaking gently of the past,—hopefully of the future. One day I watched a field of yellow barley, speckled with crimson poppies ; and the fancy came to me that the good sound corn was the honest nature God planted in me, though I was a felon’s son, and that the crimson poppies were my vain desires, and evil impulses, and manifold errors. And for the moment I thought I could distinguish between the good and the bad of my past life. But the next minute the wind came blowing up from the sea, swaying the light yellow ears and crimson blossoms till they seemed like two liquids thrown together in one vast lake wherein they were tossed about, but wouldn’t make one colour,—the yellow streaks and the crimson streaks running into each other like ribands, but not uniting. And the wind came up stronger and stronger, and my eyes grew weary ;—and the two colours were blended together, so that I could no longer separate them. Then as I walked away in tears, a voice in the wind said, ‘Go to your friend. Ask him never to speak of the past.

Tell him it will be profitless labour to try to discern the evil from the good, which, like the poppies and the corn driven to and fro by the strong wind, are so mixed together that no human eye, only God's eye, can distinguish the one from the other.'—This was weeks since, and now, after many struggles, and doubts, and fears, I do the bidding of the voice, and I say to my old friend, 'Don't look at the past. Don't ask about it. It won't bear examination. Never speak of it. Help me to be happier for the future: and God will—' "

But the supplication was abruptly closed; for the aged actor had fallen on his knees at his old friend's feet, and having thrown his arms upon his breast, was sobbing like a child. The sacred power that keeps human memories green had brought those long separated friends together in loving embrace.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOHN BRADDOCK'S CANDID OPINION OF HIS SON-IN-LAW.

THE two days (Saturday and Sunday) following their reunion, Herbert Andrews and Mr Shakspeare Wylie spent together. In telling the latter that he had purchased the good-will and stock of the late Mr Carley's business in the Buttermarket Street of Sedghassock, Herbert Andrews had practised no deception. The bargain was concluded; and under the name of John Braddock he had already been introduced by the widow Carley to those of the Sedghassock citizens who had been her late husband's best customers. It will therefore be convenient to speak henceforth of the bookseller and stationer by the name under which he had decided to pass. Herbert Andrews, therefore, let it be remembered, is from this time forth—John Braddock.

Of *his* (John Braddock's) *past* the two friends never spoke; that is to say, they avoided mention of his career throughout the period intervening between the death of his wife and his re-appearance at Easthaven. But they conversed freely on all other topics,—on the pro-

fessional career and private life of the actor, on the old times before his sister Christina's death, on the education and life of her daughter. When they first began to talk about Christina Morris, the old uncle, with well-intended dishonesty putting on his cheeriest manner and most grandiloquent style, proceeded to paint the character, history, and position of Alexander Barber in agreeable colours.

"My dear friend," said the old man, "Christina is married—not indeed to a gentleman of that condition which at one time I trusted her husband would hold; but to an energetic, enterprising, and well-known man—Mr Alexander Barber. Mr Barber's father, during his life-time, was master of the running horses to the great Earl of Trumpington (grandfather, as you are doubtless aware, of the present Marquis of Trumpington); and at his decease he left each of his numerous family a fortune of £5,000. You see, therefore, my dear friend, that by birth Christina's husband is highly respectable. The youngest and favourite child of a wealthy father, Alexander was educated with as much care as if he had been heir to a good estate in the 'light-lands.' At an early age, he was sent to acquire the classic languages at the Sedgehassock grammar school—a seminary which from the pious King Edward's time has maintained the highest reputation. After benefiting by the humanizing culture of that academy, he proceeded to Cambridge, at which ancient university his honest father hoped he would graduate in arts, with a view to entering the clerical profession,—the most noble the Earl of Trumpington, with the munificence which is ever characteristic of an enlightened patron, having promised to secure the young man preferment. But Alexander's tastes were averse from the severe studies re-

quired of gentlemen who enroll themselves members of the revered order of our Anglican clergy. A boyhood spent at King's Heath, amidst sporting associates and pursuits, had inspired him with ambition to follow in his honest father's footsteps. Leaving Cambridge, when he had been there little more than a year, he resided with his father until that good man's death, when my distinguished patron, Lord Taranflit, engaged him as his trainer, a position, I need not say, of considerable emolument and high distinction. Circumstances, which it is needless for me to detail, led to a discontinuance of intercourse between Mr. Barber and Lord Taranflit; and since that time he has persevered in his profession, without the countenance of any particular patron. His present residence is Little Deane, within six miles of this place, where he is a breeder of horses; but just now he is absent from home,—on an excursion to the 'corn country,' where he is well-known, and highly respected in sporting circles."

John Braddock sat in the parlour of the actor's lodgings, with his eyes fixed on the carpet, while the manager gave this flattering picture of Alexander Barber. He neither raised his eyes nor spoke a word, until the sonorous periods of Mr. Shakespeare Wylie had ceased; but on his old friend becoming silent, he looked up and said in a small, hard voice,—a voice which gave the hearer an impression that the speaker had a hidden purpose,—a voice with a faint tone of sarcasm in it, "Alexander Barber, Farmer, near Easthaven. Ay, I have heard of him before."

Mr. Shakespeare Wylie moved uneasily in his chair, and catching hold of the long silk tassel of his velvet cap, put it out of the way; that is to say, he took it in his hand, and then let it hang down as it was before.

Whenever the manager was disturbed, it was his wont so to fiddle with his cap-tassel and—put it out of the way.

“I have seen him,” continued John Braddock, in the same voice.

“Indeed!” ejaculated the actor, becoming more uneasy.

“Seen his pale face, and ragged whiskers, and crafty eyes.”

“Good Heavens! where have you seen him?”

“I’ve heard his vulgar, jeering laugh—and shameless tongue.”

Mr. Wylie pulled his cap tassel again, and looked abashed, as a child might look on being convicted of telling a fib.

“And I know the fellow’s history,” the demure Mr. Braddock continued, rendering his voice more emphatic, without raising it to a higher key,—“not so well as you do, Wylie,—but quite well enough to be sure he’s an infernal rascal.”

“Herbert, Herbert—I mean old friend,” stammered the actor.

“Hush, Wylie”—said John Braddock, stopping his friend, but evincing no sign of excitement as he did so, “begin at once to call me by my right name,—my *new* name, I mean; *that’s* my right one now. It’ll soon come to you. Try it—just say ‘Mr. Braddock.’ That other name is a part of the past. It’s buried for ever under the barley and the poppies.”

“I can’t do it,—be hanged if I can!”

“You *must*,” returned the other firmly; and, either tickled by the disconcerted air of his old friend’s face, or the drollery of his own position, as the actor’s instructor, he laughed out—not loudly, but pleasantly.

Whereat the manager was forced to laugh too, and with tears twinkling in his eyes, exclaimed with feeling, "Oh, God, it's his old laugh! It's his old laugh."

The laughter had the good effect which John Braddock wished it to have; for it dissipated Mr. Wylie's confusion and chagrin, and made him sweetly patient of his tassel, which, having made half the circuit of the actor's head during his laughter, was now hanging over his left cheek.

"Wylie," observed Mr. Braddock, becoming grave once more, but speaking with more cordial tones, "it's very considerate, and like yourself, to make the best of that fellow. But it won't do—with me. I have lived too long with rogues, not to know them by sight. Now, speak out, old friend:—How did she come to marry him? Tell me the *worst* of him. I know he's a scoundrel."

Thus invited to candour, Mr. Wylie confided to his brother-in-law all those particulars concerning Alexander and Christina Morris with which the reader is familiar, and several particulars in addition. It may be remembered that in the Green Room of the King's Heath theatre, the manager, at the commencement of his interview with Edgar Turrett, was not otherwise than emphatic in his censures of his nephew by marriage, though he cooled down and appeared to modify his extreme views under the friendly suggestions and assurances of the young Squire. But though Edgar Turrett rode out upon the heath, complacently attributing to his own tact and generosity the change which had come over the senior's manner, and though he afterwards received many commendations from Carry for having reconciled the old man to his

niece's husband, in reality the manager retained unaltered his estimate of Alexander Barber. In one respect only did Edgar's words influence the old man. They allayed his momentary wrath, and made him see that after all—since Christina was married, and could not be unmarried—he should be serving her interests best by speaking as little ill and as much good as possible of her husband. Prudence whispered, "Alec Barber seems to be doing better in the world than he was some years back. Possibly, even yet—though he must be a rascal to the last—he'll be outwardly more respectable. Black-leg and scamp as he is, Christina is living with him. And knave though he be, there are many gentlemen in the sporting world who are disposed to think leniently of his past peccadilloes, and act generously to him. For Christina's sake, let the fellow take his chance." So the manager swallowed his rage, and, though he was by no means a man addicted to hypocrisy, pretended to agree with Edgar. In the recesses of his breast, however, he held his opinion that Alec Barber was an irreclaimable scamp.

To John Braddock Mr. Shakespeare Wylie now laid aside disguise, and, with tears running down his furrowed cheeks, told him,—how his daughter (dutiful, docile, affectionate, as she had always been on all other occasions) had in one period of waywardness become the wife of an utterly bad, heartless fellow.

"Does she love him, Wylie?" inquired John Braddock.

"Pah!—love him!" exclaimed the manager with agitation. "How should she?—the infernal ruffian has sworn at her—struck her—kicked her! She must loathe him, hate him; but she never told me so. No

power on earth would make her own how she abhors him! You see, old friend, it's the child, the *child*, that makes her cling to him. She is thinking of what the child will think, if, when she comes to be a woman, she finds her father and mother at war with each other."

"What makes him take her to his house just now?"

"God knows! When she was lying at Merton-Piggott, after that fire I told you of (the fire from which young Squire Turrett, of the Hollow House, saved her), she wrote to him, telling him that she should never be able to act again, and asking what she had best do. The ladies of Merton-Piggott—kind gentlewomen that they are!—would have set her up in a school, as a teacher; but she would not agree to profit by their benevolence till she'd got his sanction to the scheme. So she wrote to him,—wrote to him more than once before he replied. At last she got a letter, telling her to wait quietly at Merton-Piggott, and he would come round and see her. He didn't say when he was coming, or what he was doing in the 'corn country,' where he was when he wrote to her. In his letter he said nothing about taking her to Little Deane, but told her not to accept the offer of the school till she saw him. Well, the next turn in the game was that he all of a sudden appeared in Merton-Piggott; and before I could hear anything of his movements, he had carried her away, under the eyes of the whole town, as his wife."

"He must have decided, then, to take her home suddenly at last."

"It looks like it."

"What's the man after, Wylie?"

"After? after?—How should I know?—A man has a right to claim his wife and carry her home with him, if he likes, hasn't he?"

"More especially when she is ready to accompany him. But, Wylie, such a man as our friend doesn't even behave decently to a wife (whom he cares so little about that he has lived apart from her for years together) without an object?"

"I know what you're thinking off."

"Come then, Wylie," rejoined Mr. Braddock, in the same hard, quiet way to which attention has been already drawn. "What am I thinking about?"

"You're thinking—Can that rascal be after getting some money out of young Squire Turrett, who has taken notice of him on race-courses, and helped him to a job before now? Can he think he'll be more likely to set his grip on his prey, by playing the good husband to the woman whom the young Squire saved from burning to death, and whom he, of course, has a sort of tender feeling for, *because* he has saved her from death? There! you'd some such thought as that in your mind?"

"'Pon my honour, you've pretty nearly put my thought into words."

But Mr. Shakespeare Wylie hadn't put the whole of John Braddock's thought into words. How was he to detect or imagine the more important part of it?

The actor didn't know of John Braddock's visit to Castle Hollow, of John Braddock's interview with Miss Turrett in the church, of John Braddock's knowledge that Alexander Barber had witnessed at least a part of that interview, of Miss Turrett's fear that at least a clue to a part of the dreadful secret

of the Hollow House (which she and her father had spent long years in 'living down') had been caught by the spy and the eaves-dropper. Honour, which neither an unprincipled youth nor an outcast's life of degradation had utterly obliterated, and loyal fidelity to the lady (whose tomb would bear the words 'Faithful unto death; faithful after death') had sealed John Braddock's lips to his friend as to these facts; which, indeed, belonged to the past. But John Braddock put all these facts together, and the thought in his mind, which Mr. Wylie never imagined, shaped itself thus:—"Undecided what step to take, the man, in some excursion to that part of the country, came round to Castle Hollow, just to look at the house and estate of the young Squire who had saved his wife.—What he saw and heard through the church-window was enough to decide him to get, if possible, closer to his wife's preserver; so that, if he should by any means get a fuller knowledge of the cause which induced a gentle lady of spotless reputation to meet clandestinely a mere wandering hawker, he might be in a position to use it with the greatest possible effect. So he determined to avow his marriage to the woman whom the young man had saved, and make her (by some means) a stepping-stone to his side. Now, I know why the scoundrel got me to talk with him, and scanned me as he did, on the Easthaven Road. Pshaw! he would like to be on my track! *I'll be on his!*"

A spare, demure, elderly man, close cropped, close shorn, and spectacled, dressed, too, in the dark sober dress of a respectable citizen, John Braddock, in outward aspect, was not a man to frighten timid people; but there was a dangerous devil's nature concealed under his mild tranquillity.

In that past about which he had resolved never to speak, he had more than once had enemies on his track ; more than once, too, had been on the track of enemies. The enemies from whom he had fled he had always distanced ; the enemies whom he had pursued he had always come up with.

"What are you thinking of, Braddock?" cried the old manager, quickly. "I don't like to look at you."

"Oh, no harm," he returned, in his customary quiet way. "I'll tell you. It won't frighten you."

"Well?"

"Just this : I should like to go over to-morrow to Little Deane and see her. That's a peaceable enough proposition, old friend, surely."

But the proposal, if it didn't frighten Mr. Shakespeare Wylie, startled and perturbed him.

"What ! would you make yourself known to her?" he asked.

"No, no," replied Mr. Braddock, "I don't mean that. You say her husband is away from home ; can't you go over to-morrow (Sunday) afternoon to see her, and take me as an old friend ? I could see her then, and hear her talk."

The manager was silent.

"What have you told her about her father, Wylie?" continued John Braddock, lowering his voice.

"Truth—the truth."

"What !" exclaimed Mr. Braddock, for the first time displaying excitement.

"I have told her," answered the old man, in a tremulous tone, "that when I was a poor actor at the Covent Garden Theatre, living in lodgings with my dear sister, who is in heaven, I formed the acquaintance

of a gay young gentleman of the Temple, who, though he lived with the Templars and visited with great people, didn't want to play the patron over me, but was in every respect my friend, though I was no better than a poor starving actor. I told her *that*, and *that was true*.—I have told her that this gay-spirited young gentleman fell in love with my pretty sister, and instead of trying to make a toy of her, made her his wife—though she was only a sempstress; and that when my sister had been married just long enough to have a child, she gave birth to a daughter, and died, and I and my friend saw her buried. *That was true*.—I have told her that, shortly after her mother's death, her father fell into poverty, and trouble, and—died also; and *that one dark, gloomy day I took my last long look of him, and went away a mourner. And that in a certain way was true, too.*"

"God bless you, Wylie—God bless you!" rejoined Braddock, softly.

"That's just all I've ever told her. That and your portrait (she has the little miniature you once gave me) are all she knows of you."

"Wylie," answered the other, with quiet firmness, "may she never know more of me! I wish to live my secret shame down, so that it may never trouble her. If I ever impart even a portion of it to her—if I ever reveal to her that her father still lives, and that I am her father—she will have already fallen into some worse calamity than any she has yet known, from which I can see no way to extricate her, except by speaking to her with a father's authority and love."

CHAPTER XIV.

ALEC BARBER'S 'LITTLE PLACE.'

AT three o'clock, p.m., on the following day (Sunday), Christina Barber was walking in the garden which flanked her husband's lonely farm-house, when she was agreeably surprised by the appearance of a gig at the orchard-gate, in which were two gentlemen; one of whom she instantly recognised as her uncle. The other visitor was a certain grave elderly man—better known at this present time to the reader than he was just then to Mrs. Barber.

Giving charge of their horse to a farm-servant who was conveniently at hand, the manager and his friend alighted, and advanced towards Mrs. Barber, who hastened to welcome them.

"Dear uncle," cried the woman, enthusiastically, kissing her uncle on each cheek, and seeming for a few moments more than half inclined to weep for pleasure over him, "how good, how very good it is of you to come over and see me! I am rewarded for not going to church this afternoon. I thought of going, but the

church is three miles away—too far for a walk ; and now that Mr. Barber is away from home with the gig, I can't leave the farm—except on my feet. Dear, dear uncle, you're better than sunshine on this dull day !”

The church was *rather more* than three miles away from the farm-house, but it was nearer to Alec Barber's 'little place' (as he mysteriously called the homestead when he mentioned it to his King's Heath friends) than any habitation superior to the peasant's cottages which were thinly scattered about the flat, oozy marsh-land. Retirement was the solitary recommendation of the horse-dealer's residence. A small, dilapidated house, with a slip of neglected garden on one side of it, and an equally neglected orchard on the other ; a crazy barn standing in the midst of a few sheds and stables, which were the only objects on the estate marked by indications of recent repair ; forty or fifty acres of sedgy swamp and coarse pasturage ; a field or two of poor land, from which the occupant extracted, year after year, with the smallest possible amount of labour, a thin crop of very inferior oats ; broken fences, rotten rails, gates with broken hinges, and left half open—other gates made fast with bands of old rope-end ! Such were the principal external features of Mr. Alexander Barber's 'little place.'

The interior of the house was less desolate and miserable. The building was weather-tight, as far as a lath-and-plaster dwelling, more than a century old, could be weather-tight, in a locality over which sluggish marsh-miasma brooded the whole year round—over which the bleak east winds, coming from the sea, swept, unbroken by a single clump of timber more important than the scanty collection of

gnarled, scarred, and almost sapless apple-trees, which were dying of old age in Mr. Barber's orchard. The rooms, however, were sufficiently supplied with furniture. The largest apartment on the ground floor (which, after the fashion of the inferior farm-houses of the 'light lands' opened into the yard) had a cheap carpet thrown over the middle portion of the brick floor; before the ample recess containing the fire-place, there was a thick rug; and in either chimney-corner there was an old-fashioned easy chair, covered with dirty chintz. Cheap and humble as were the appointments of the room, these few signs of comfort were not lost on Mr. Braddock's observant eyes, as he followed Christina and her uncle into the house.

He had already been introduced to Mrs. Barber in the garden.

"My darling Christina," the manager had said, "allow me to introduce you to an old friend, a companion in long past years,—Mr. Braddock,—Mr. John Braddock."

Christina bowed.

"Mr. Braddock" continued the manager, in his ornate style, "knew me, Christina, in the golden days of my youth, when hope covered the ground before me with flowers, and sweet ambition wove fascinating dreams of future triumph. He knew your poor father also, my child, and loved him, even as I loved him. In thy father's name welcome him."

"Indeed, I do welcome him," returned Christina, cordially, extending her hand to the stranger, who shook it warmly, but still with a certain stiffness of manner, which was not otherwise than in accordance with his grave appearance.

"Till lately, Mrs. Barber," he observed, when he

had thus responded to her greeting, "I have lived abroad. Much of my life has been passed in Canada. Returning within the last few months to my native land, I was looking about for a suitable place in which to establish myself in business, when, accidentally visiting Sedgehassock, I found a suitable opening, and I forthwith arranged to take the shop of Mr. Carley, the late stationer and printer in the Buttermarket. It was not till I was engaged in examining the accounts of the business, that I discovered your uncle's connection with the old city. On seeing 'Mr. Shakespeare Wylie, tragedian' amongst the entries in the ledger, I said 'Bless me, that must be my old friend.' And sure enough I was right. So, having occasion to visit Easthaven, where Mr. Carley had some trade customers, I made myself known to my old friend, after an absence of nearly thirty years."

"And you were my father's friend also?"

"Yes, yes,—poor fellow!"

The three walked the length of the garden once or twice, treading on the green slime and weeds which did duty for gravel on the principal walk, when Christina invited them to enter the house.

"You find me in terrible confusion and disorder, Mr. Braddock," she said cheerfully, endeavouring to make the best of the surrounding desolation. "My husband and I haven't lived here long. Indeed, we've only just begun to settle ourselves in this lonely place, and feel at home. If you come a year hence, you'll find the place greatly improved. When the spring comes, uncle, I mean to turn gardener, and make this such a pretty place you'll hardly know it. In its present state, I must confess it has not many attractions. But I can make you comfortable indoors.

I am quite alone in the house, for my maid has gone to see her mother, and won't be back till nine o'clock. But I can give you tea,—some of the Merton-Piggott tea, which you say is the best tea in the 'light lands', uncle. And I have a splendid ham in the larder, which Mr. Barber bought for me in Easthaven, ten days since. Come in."

Whereupon Christina conducted her visitors into the spacious, low-ceiled apartment (already described) and thence to the inner parlour, where Mr. John Braddock was agreeably surprised to find a brisk fire crackling cheerfully in the grate, a warm carpet, easy chairs, a mahogany dining-table, and a horse-hair covered sofa. On the walls were numerous sporting pictures, and in a recess stood a small cabinet of books. At a glance it was clear to John Braddock that, whatever his faults might be, Alec Barber had the virtue of loving comfort,—a virtue, by the way, not uncommon in the now extinct school of 'King's Heath men,' to which Mr. Barber belonged.

"Now, uncle," said Christina, playing the hostess with the best possible grace, "if you will entertain Mr. Braddock for ten minutes, I'll go and get over my house-keeping at once; I'll bring the kettle and tea-things in here, and then I shan't have to leave you again. You needn't trouble yourself about the horse;—the man will take care of that. You'll have pipes and grog after tea, of course. Every one drinks grog who lives out in the marshes."

Retiring from the room, when she had said these words, Christina left her two guests to amuse themselves during her absence. Having exchanged significant glances with his companion, the manager rose, and humming the air of an old song walked to

the window, where he had an uninterrupted prospect of flat meadows for observation, whilst he took his velvet cap from his pocket, and placed it on his snowy head.

The glances were all that passed between the two.

Whilst the manager was humming away at the window, John Braddock went to the cabinet of books, and inspected their titles. He had no difficulty in concluding that the collection was made by Christina's husband, whose literary tastes had been formed at the Sedgehassock grammar school, Cambridge,—and King's Heath.

The volumes admitted of classification under four heads—science, history, biography, and fiction. Under the latter head appeared the works of every novelist, from the days of Mistress Aphra Behn to the close of the last century, whose pages no virtuous woman of this generation would look into twice. Science was represented by numerous treatises and standard works on the 'Laws of Chance,' betting, and card tricks. In the department of history, 'King's Heath Calendars' and 'Records of Turf Transactions' were predominant. But the most interesting division of Mr. Alexander Barber's library was the biographical, which, in addition to lives of frail actresses, and other ladies distinguished by their absence of virtue, comprised an almost complete collection of those volumes of 'Select Criminal Trials' which in the last century were the 'sensation literature' of our ancestors' drawing-rooms.

Taking from its place Volume the First of a set of four volumes, entitled "Select Trials: Sessions House of Old Bailey; compiled from reports of trials prior to 1764," John Braddock spent a couple of minutes look-

ing at the frontispiece, which was a pleasant and truly edifying work of art, divided into seven compartments,—each compartment containing a separate picture. “Picture 1. Boy picking pocket; Picture 2. Burglar entering house; Picture 3. Highwayman stopping coach; Picture 4. Jury finding verdict; Picture 5. Return of verdict ‘guilty’ in crowded court; Picture 6. The Condemned Cell; Picture 7. Execution at Tyburn.” With a smile on his lips, John Braddock closed the volume; and having returned it to its place, took down the last volume of “Meautyss’s Elegant Collection of Trials, Compiled With Especial Regard to the Fair Sex, So that Every Trial May Gratify their Taste for Romance, whilst Nothing May Offend the Delicacy Which is their Universal Characteristic—Six Volumes.” Scarcely had John Braddock taken down this volume and opened its pages, when the blood shot into his face, and he made a start of surprise, imperceptible to the actor, who was still looking out of the window.

He was still reading the book, when Christina re-entered the room, with a kettle in her right hand.

“Oh, Mr. Braddock,” she said, as she put the kettle on the fire, “don’t look at those horrible books. They are my husband’s, and I hope I shall induce him to put them out of the way. What can you be reading one of them for? Their titles show that they’re all bad alike.”

“An old book-dealer, Mrs. Barber,” returned John Braddock, with perfect composure, “can’t help laying his hand on every parcel of books that falls in his way. I agree with you in thinking that Mr. Barber’s collection is more unpleasant than valuable.”

Saying which he shut the book, and replaced it on the shelf.

"Here is something which will give you more pleasure to look at," said Christina, taking a small case, which contained a miniature likeness, from a pocket of her dress; "I have just been upstairs to get it for you. As you knew my father, you will recognise that portrait of him."

Bowing his thanks for this graceful attention, John Braddock took the miniature, and sitting down prepared to study it attentively.

The likeness was a well-executed portrait of a smooth-cheeked, beardless young man, dressed in the morning costume in vogue with young men of fashion about ten years before the close of the eighteenth century. Small ruffles peeped out under the cuffs of the blue coat-sleeves; the shirt-front was plenteously frilled; and the hair, flowing loosely, was tied behind in a club—pig-tails, which were to be seen in the country amongst old-fashioned people, almost half a century later, having been for some time laid aside by young men of the highest mode.

"How long will Mr. Barber be absent from Little Deane?" inquired the manager of his niece, while John Braddock was engaged with the miniature.

"I don't at all know. When he left home, he said I was not to look for him till he wrote to me; and I haven't heard from him yet."

"You must be very lonely, my poor child? What will you do to get rid of time?"

"Oh, I shall do well enough, uncle. Don't make yourself unhappy about me. Mr. Barber is going to let me have some cows and poultry, and a good dairy-

maid to teach me how to make butter; but I shan't have them till the winter is over. In the spring I shall have quite enough work to keep me merry; for, as I told you just now, I am bent on making a pretty garden for myself. And, as soon as I have put the place into order, I shall have the child home—for the summer months."

"You wont have her always with you then?"

"No, I shall only wish for her company in the summer."

"Umph!"

"You see," continued the niece with slight embarrassment, "this isn't a very healthy spot for a child, in the cold seasons. There is so much ague about."

The manager shuddered.

"And in the meantime," Christina went on cheerily, "I am at my old trade again."

"What, book-making?"

"Yes, another novel. I should like to earn enough money to pay for the cows, and my other little plans. Moreover, the work keeps me happy. I was planning a scene, when you drove up."

"That's right, my darling. You're a daughter of genius!"

"How I shall contrive to get it sold when it's finished, I am sure I don't know,—but I shall write to the gentleman in London who published my last."

"Mr. Braddock will help you. Eh, Mr. Braddock?"

Turning to Mr. Braddock, as her uncle said these last words, Christina saw that his eyes were bright with tears.

Yes, there were tears in the eyes of the grave, demure stranger.

Attributing the tears to the sight of his old friend's portrait, it is needless to say that Christina felt drawn to the man by this sign of sensibility and affection.

"It's very much like him, just what I can remember him, Mrs. Barber," he observed, returning the portrait to Christina with a bow. "Thank you,—madam."

"You'll help my niece to sell her book to a London publisher?" inquired the manager, putting the question more fully.

"What, madam,—are you again using your pen, which your uncle informs me you have already employed to such good purpose?"

To this inquiry Christina replied, with a blush, that she was indeed at work on the composition of a tale which she hoped would be finished in the course of the next few months.

To which communication Mr. Braddock made response: "Then, madam, when it is finished, if I can be of any service to you in introducing it to a London publisher, I shall deem it an honour to be allowed to obey your commands. I have been for many years in the book-trade, and can possibly be of use to you. My predecessor at Sedgessock had a large connection amongst the inferior book-dealers of the 'light lands,' and I hope to develop that portion of his business. So I shall have frequent intercourse with London publishers, who will possibly be not the less inclined to listen to my representations, because I buy their goods."

Having made a few more visits to her kitchen, and brought in the tea-things and provisions by instalments

(for her left arm, though it was nearly healed, was still far from able to do a strong arm's work), Christina made tea, and entreated her visitors hospitably.

After tea, the day having rapidly closed in evening, she pulled down the holland blind over the diamond-shaped panes of the parlour window, lit candles, and brought out whisky, and Hollands, and brandy from Mr. Alec Barber's stores (together with pipes and tobacco); whereupon tumblers of grog were brewed, and the little parlour assumed a festive appearance. The 'King's Heath man,' who never had a cabbage in his garden, always had a bag of lemons in his kitchen cupboard.

While Mr. Shakespeare Wylie and Mr. John Braddock smoked pipes and sipped grog, Christina exerted herself to the utmost of her conversational powers, and practised sundry arts of amiable hypocrisy, for the purpose of impressing upon them that she was as happy a married woman as could be found in all England. At her uncle's request, she sang those of her old ballads which had been most applauded in the theatres of the 'light lands;' when the staid Mr. Braddock was so delighted with her voice and style of singing, that he let his pipe out, and left his grog untouched.

Thus agreeably was the entertainment proceeding, when the party experienced a not altogether agreeable surprise. It was half-past eight o'clock by Mr. Wylie's watch, and that worthy man had twice observed that he must be on his way back to Easthaven for a good night's rest, as he had a heavy rehearsal at the theatre on the following day, when a succession of brisk taps on the parlour window (taps made by some person in the garden), accompanied by the exclamation "Yai, yai, yai, Mrs. Barber, I'll be with you in a minute,"

caused the three occupants of the parlour to jump up, and regard each other with astonishment.

"Bless me," said Christina, "it's my husband; he has come back without writing."

"Indeed. I hope he wont think us in the way," observed the disconcerted manager.

"He finds his house in good order, and with good company in it too," was Mr. Braddock's remark on an event which, it is needless to say, was far from pleasing to him.

But there was no time for further debate, for the master of the house had already entered the parlour—having caught up Mr. Braddock's concluding words.

"Good company; the best of good company, and my best thanks to it for honouring my 'little place' with a visit," observed Mr. Barber quickly, in the most amiable tone of voice he could assume, as he took off his white hat and drab overcoat, and laid them on the side-table. "Gentlemen, you're heartily welcome. Mr. Wylie, I never saw you looking better in my life; and I hear you've had a good season at Easthaven. Very glad to see you too, sir,"

These last words were addressed to Mr. Braddock, who as a stranger was standing up, waiting to be introduced to the master of the house.

"An old friend of uncle's, Alec," interposed Christina, introducing the visitor. "Mr. Braddock—Mr. Barber—Mr. Braddock, Alec, knew my father."

"Then, my dear," replied Alec Barber, cordially, "I am delighted to see him. Any friend of your uncle's is welcome to my house, and Alec Barber will be his servant, against all odds. Gentlemen, I wont ask if Christina has done her utmost to make you enjoy yourselves; for hospitality is *her* virtue, as well as my own.

Moreover, I know she has been singing to you, and she was 'precious shy of singing to a King's Heath friend who came round to this 'little place' a day or so after *we* had settled here."

"You heard me sing?" cried Christina.

"I *did* hear you sing, Mrs. Barber. I have been walking about the garden for the last hour, taking a peep at you every now and then, through the little opening between the window-blind and the wall. And a very cozy, jolly party you looked, I can assure you. Why, Mr. Braddock was so charmed with your singing, he let his pipe out. Here's a kiss for you, Mrs. Barber, for singing so prettily. Now, gentlemen, do sit down, and have a glass *with me* before you go."

"We'll have just half a glass with you, Mr. Barber," returned the manager, with feigned cordiality; "but it must be only half a glass, and must be drunk, too, while the horse is being put to. We must be starting back for Easthaven."

"Good, Mr. Wylie!—Then, Christina, my dear, tell the man (he's in the back-kitchen getting his supper) to put your uncle's horse to. 'Welcome the coming and speed the parting guest,' is King's Heath rule. But let's have the half-tumbler. Take some of this whisky, Mr. Braddock; it's as soft as honey, and as lively as brimstone. Fine stuff; considerably above ordinary water-mark. It is of a sort known in these parts as 'Damont's Peculiar.' I swopped a young three-year old with a bad constitution for a lot of it, enough to last me till doomsday. My best health to you, gentlemen. Ah, prime stuff to keep marsh ague out of your bones. Stranger to these parts, Mr. Braddock?"

"I live at Sedgehassock."

"Ah, fine old city, with plenty of business and money

in it,—but the business is all of the wrong sort, and the money is all made in the wrong way.”

“Indeed !”

“Nothing but trade and religion, nobody but tradesmen and parsons in the place. To think of a fine city like that without races ! it’s disgusting,—it’s sickening ! Sedgehassock people are all for industry, and doing things on the square. There’s not a man in the whole city who lives thoroughly on ‘the cross.’ The place won’t do at any price for a King’s Heath man. When I was a boy I went to the grammar school there, and was skinned by old Dr. Malthus once a fortnight, regularly. An old wretch ! He was always after having me do my own work, and I was just as determined to have it done by somebody else. What a life he led me, to be sure ! and what a life I led him ! But I was too many for him in the long run. He had a magnificent Newfoundland dog, which he loved better than his own flesh and blood. Well, the very day I left the school, that dog was found dead in the Doctor’s stable. Somebody had poisoned it. Singular thing, wasn’t it ?—Of course, I put on mourning for the dog.”

“Very singular !”

“Still, I don’t wish any man to think ill of his own city ! But, being a sporting man, that is to say, a racing man, which is something higher than a mere sportsman, I never go to Sedgehassock, if I can help it.”

In this lively fashion did Mr. Alexander Barber chat to his guests, until Christina entered the room with the announcement that her uncle’s horse and gig were at the gate, ready for the homeward drive ; whereupon Mr. Shakespeare Wylie and Mr. Braddock put on great-coats, and prepared for departure.

"Don't trouble yourself to come out and see us off, Mr. Barber," observed the manager.

Alec Barber gave utterance to an emphatic expression, which has been alluded to in a previous chapter of this work, and playfully observed that it was his rule to see all rogues off the premises.

"And do wrap up well," continued Alec with affectionate consideration, "it's a chill, raw night, and the fog on the marshes is very likely to take away your voice, and then where would you be? Just think of your vocal organ, uncle ! A tragic actor without an organ, is no more use than a jockey without a backbone. So do take care of yourself, old gentleman. I don't wish to come in for your property just yet ! And as for Christina, she's so amply provided for by marriage-settlement that she doesn't care a brass farthing about your pickings."

"Thank you, Mr. Barber, thank you," replied the manager, his eyes glittering brightly, and his face becoming very red.

At the gate, to which he politely attended his visitors, when they had taken leave of Christina, Alec maintained the same jocose rattle. "Oh, you're the whip, are you, Mr. Braddock ? Well, sir, be careful ;—for that hackney you've hired for the day is worth, at the very least, thirty shillings ; and he stands so shaky on his pins, he's very likely to drop to pieces before you get him home. So be careful. An old linen-horse 'll come to grief, if it isn't taken care of. There, good-bye to you, uncle. Take care of your organ, whatever you do. I haven't any throat-lozenges in the house ; but I shouldn't wonder if Christina 'll get a pot of black currant jam by the time you pay us another visit. Now, Mr. Braddock, easy over the stones ; and if you should

have a mishap, call me in as witness that the Easthaven thief sent you out with a horse not fit for road-work. To serve a friend, Alec Barber is not the man to stick at a trifle.—Keep your mouth shut, Mr. Wylie, as you go over the marshes;—God bless you!—and come again when you want change of air.”

Mr. Shakespeare Wylie acted on his nephew’s advice, and kept his mouth shut, whilst the horse, which had elicited Alec Barber’s humorous criticism, slowly trotted along the road leading through the low meadows to Easthaven.

Neither the manager nor John Braddock spoke a word, until they had left the fen behind them.

“Well,” Mr. Wylie at length asked, “what do you think of your son-in-law?”

“I wasn’t thinking of him,” replied John Braddock, “but of *her*! Good heavens, Wylie, no delicate woman can live in that swamp for six years! And yet *he* doesn’t seem hurt by it!”

“*He* is never at home for three nights together,” replied the manager. “*She’ll* have to live there the whole year round.”

“Poor creature, poor creature!” remarked John Braddock.

And without exchanging more words, the two slowly drove back to Easthaven, each thinking to himself.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. ALEXANDER BARBER STUDIES "CROWN LAW."

HAVING seen Mr. Shakespeare Wylie and John Braddock start for Easthaven, and having listened for a minute to the sound of their retreating wheels, Alec Barber made use of his favourite expression of emphasis, and muttered, "What can have brought them here? That's a queer start!—Alec, my boy, you must think over this!"

That he might the better think over it, he took a turn on the green slime of the garden path, 'taking stock' (as he termed it) of the evening's occurrences. "Very good, very good," he said, after ten minutes of meditation, mentally putting a flourish under his list of items of stock. "Now, for Mrs. Alec! I wonder what lies she'll tell me. I never caught her telling even a fib yet. She lies in such a crafty manner!"

Having drawn this charitable inference from Christina's apparent veracity, Alec Barber re-entered the house, and sitting down by the parlour fire

proceeded to have a little conversation with Mrs. Alec.

"Just give me a pipe, Chrissy, and a tumbler of stiffish mixture," said Mr. Alec, by way of commencement. "I'll have another go of Damont's Peculiar. It's good liquor, and all the better to me, because the man I bought it of was so preciously diddled about the three-year old."

Christina having obediently supplied him with pipe and grog, Alec took a whiff, and asked, "Well,—what has the old mountebank been talking about to-night? My virtues, I'll be bound?"

In moments of fire-side confidence Alec always spoke of Mr. Wylie as 'the old mountebank.'

"He said little enough," responded Christina meekly.

Hoping to make him sooner or later an affectionate father, though she had long since despaired of ever seeing him a good husband, the woman never openly resented his insolence. Moreover she stood in very genuine terror of him. So she merely answered, "He said little enough, except that he was very glad to see me. Of course he told me the news of the theatre. He has had a good enough season at Easthaven, to make up for his loss at Merton-Piggott.—That's a comfort for him, dear old man!"

"The sort of comfort for him to appreciate! A rusty old screw! Did he tell you if he meant to provide for your child?"

"Not exactly."

"If he means to do what's liberal by her, I wish he'd make haste about it. He ought to be poisoned. No man has a right to live to his age and be so strong. Who's this Mr. Braddock?"

"Oh, a very old friend, who has been ever so many years abroad—in Canada."

"Indeed?"

"He knew my father, before he died."

"I suppose he didn't make his acquaintance afterwards.—Let's see, Mrs. Alec, your father was a gentleman,—wasn't he?"

"You know he was a barrister, as well as I do. What do you ask me for?"

"(Emphatic expression) I suppose I've a right to ask who my own father-in-law was, if I like? Ay? So he was a gentleman.—That accounts for his daughter being such a fine lady. By-the-bye, did he marry your mother?"

Christina made no reply;—but that speech, like thousands of similar speeches, was not forgotten by the patient woman.

"So Braddock was your father's old friend, was he? The fellow says he lives at Sedgehassock.—What is he?"

"A bookseller. He has only just settled there. He has taken Mr. Carley's business in the Buttermarket, and he has kindly offered to help me to get a publisher for my novel, when I've finished it."

"Well, that's as it ought to be! I was thinking you might contrive to put him to some use,—as he was such a particular friend of your father's."

"Don't scoff so, Alec," replied Christina, in a tone of entreaty. "I am sure he must have had a genuine and deep affection for my father. When he looked at my father's miniature, there were tears in his eyes;—I saw them."

"Come, come, Mrs. Alec,—you're not novel-writing now. That wont do."

Fortunately for Christina's peace of mind, her husband's attention was diverted at this crisis by a sound which his quick ear detected in the kitchen.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Oh, doubtless—Mary. She has been out to see her mother, who has the ague very badly, and has returned. I told her to be home at nine."

"Very good ;—then send the girl to bed ; and you may go to bed, too, Mrs. Alec, as quick as you like. I am going to sit up here for an hour or so, reading and smoking. I shan't want your company, for I am going to enjoy myself."

Acting upon this hint, Christina bade her husband good night, and went to her bedroom.

As the first step to enjoyment, Mr. Alec Barber put his chair quite in front of the fire, seated himself in it, placed his feet in the fender, and subjected himself to the process of roasting.

"Well," ran Mr. Alec Barber's thoughts, as he sat intently watching the coals, "this is about the rummiest start you ever came in for, Master Alec ! You come of a lucky family, and no mistake about it, Master Alec ! This beats cock-fighting ! To think that the very fox you were bent on unearthing should run into your own hole in this fashion ; and that it was the merest accident in the world which brought you back to your 'little place' to-night,—just in time to see him ! What a stroke of business for a Sunday, surely !—I shall go off to the 'corn-country' in high glee. I knew the fellow the moment I clapt eyes on him ; and yet he's got up magnificently,—in just the right sort o' dress for a punctual ratepayer ; and just the last sort o' dress that an ordinary vagabond, wishing to conceal himself, would think of wearing. He must be a clever fellow—an uncommonly clever fellow !—Hang me, if I didn't say, when I met him on the Shoreham Road, that he'd be for wearing spectacles.

"What a run of luck I have had ! Number one,—

to come and pry into that church-window at the very moment when she was speaking to him as 'Herbert Andrews!' Why, that by itself is as good as a thousand pounds!—Number two,—to meet the fellow the very next day on the Easthaven road! That was a help; for if I hadn't studied him well then, I shouldn't have known him to-night.—Number three,—the success of my little run up to London this last week (Mrs. Alec thinking all the while I was in the 'corn-country'),—mark that down at two thousand pounds more at the very least!—Number four,—my running in here to-night, when the old mountebank had driven him over here to see Mrs. Alec, when they thought I was out! That's as good as all the money that bookseller can save in the course of his life. May he succeed in business! I won't touch him (unless I am precious hard run for cash) for six years at the very least. Then, when he's all fat and ripe for the knife, I'll have him.—'Come, Mr. Convict, tip up,' will be the word, 'I must have your money, stock, business, everything. Tip up, my boy, or I'll put a hempen cravat round your neck.' But I shan't disturb him yet awhile. No, no. Alec Barber will leave everybody alone, like the peaceable fellow he is, till he has got the whole of this secret in his hand.—Ri-ti-ti!

"But what" (emphatic expression) "can John Braddock, *alias* William Newton, *alias* Herbert Andrews, want, that he should come over here? He didn't want to see me; if he did, he'd have told me so. It was Mrs. Alec he wanted to see.—He snivelled over her genteel father's portrait, did he? That's a pretty sort of caper! a very sweet rig indeed! A convict, come back here before his time is out, whimpering over an early friend's miniature! My stars, what a divine thing

sensibility is ! I never whimpered over an early friend's portrait ; but then I am an honest King's Heath man. Perhaps, if I had been one of the Van Diemen's Land gentry, I should have a more feeling heart by this time. —A canting old hypocrite !

" Her father, indeed ! I suppose she had a father. Why, she could not help having one. And he was a gentleman, a friend of Wylie the actor, and a barrister ? —Exactly.—Now for Herbert Andrews ; he was a gentleman of course (it's only gentlemen who get transported for life, for picking pockets) ;—he was the actor's friend (why, the old mountebank is his friend still) ;—he was a barrister too ; I don't suppose the old mountebank had many barristers amongst his visiting acquaintance. It's odd enough that he had *one*. Hang me, if I don't believe that Herbert Andrews is her father. That would explain why he should like to come over here, and see her, and why he should whimper over his *early friend's* picture. Gad, he'd have some reason for whimpering !—But then Mrs. Alec *says* her father died when she was young ?—Exactly, exactly, I knew I'd find her out in a lie before I'd done with her. By Jove, if I don't believe I have caught her at last !

" If I can only prove it, what a rod it will be to keep in pickle for her benefit ! ' Daughter of a convict, sugar my tea instantly ! ' That would make her look lively, I guess ! ' Now, Mrs. Alec, just remember, if you put me down to such a dinner as this to-morrow, I'll have your father hung. And mind, you'll be the cause of his dying an ignominious death. '—By Jove, it would be prime ! Fancy being able to hang your own father-in-law, because his daughter gave you a tough beefsteak ! Oh, Alec, Alec, you're a lucky fellow ! "

Having brought his cogitations to this humorous an-

ticipation of approaching power, Alec rose from his chair, and walking to his cabinet of literary treasures, took from its place that same volume of "Meautyss's Elegant Collection of Trials" which Mr. John Brad-dock had shortly before perused with lively emotion.

"Ah," observed the student, returning with the work to his seat before the fire, "it's a choice little volume—one of six choice little volumes! Let's see, how did I get them? Ah, to be sure, two shillings cash, and an old silk pocket-handkerchief. To be sure! Not a bad swop either. The books suit me; for they are compiled with especial reference to the fair sex! Dear creatures, bless 'em for their delicacy, which is their universal characteristic! Now let's see—my very particular old mate, Alec Barber, you may as well freshen up your mind with reading the biographical sketch of Mr. Herbert Andrews, barrister-at-law as was; old chum of Shakespeare Wylie, mountebank, as is; and mysterious ally of Miss Turrett, of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow, as always shall be. It's Sunday evening, and it'll be a nice quiet bit of reading for you. Now then! Here goes! Bless me, the book opens exactly in the right place. Even to the turning of a printed leaf. Alec, you're in luck to-night!"

The chapter which Alec Barber forthwith perused in the "Elegant Collection," readers of this history must also glance at. It ran thus:—

"Herbert Andrews. Trial of Herbert Andrews, Barrister-at-Law, at Sessions House of Old Bailey, for stealing privately from the Person of Richard Cotton, Esquire, a Young Gentleman of Quality and Fortune, from the Eastern Counties.—1793.

"This trial occupied much public attention, as the prisoner was a member of a learned profession, a Tem-

plar, and a gay spark, well-known to the frequenters of the theatres, Vauxhall Gardens, and the coffee-houses about St. James's Street and Covent Garden, most patronised by gentlemen of fashion and pleasure; whilst the prosecutor was a young gentleman recently come into possession of a fine landed estate, who had for a year or so been diverting himself with the amusements of the town. The court was densely crowded by both sexes; and there was present an unusual number of gentlemen of the 'long robe,' anxious to see how a member of their honourable fraternity would conduct himself in so novel a position, behind the rue and fennel.

“Richard Cotton, Esquire.—It was shown by the evidence of this young gentleman that he had known the prisoner for about two years, having first formed his acquaintance at a party at Don Saltero's coffee-house, and having been subsequently much thrown into his company at the West End of the Town. The prisoner maintained an appearance of fashion, and lived intimately with the sprightliest of the young Templars. He was fond of betting, dicing, card-playing, and all other sorts of gaming, contriving by these arts to make a stylish appearance amongst his acquaintance, who regarded him as the possessor of ample private means. The gallant, however, fell into difficulties, and, being pressed for funds, contrived to extract twenty-five guineas from Mr. Cotton's purse by an ingenious device. He represented that a match had been made between the famous pedestrians, Lewis and Kitchener, which was to come off in the course of a month between Woodstock and Oxford; and that he had found an Oxford Student of landed fortune simple enough to bet him an even hundred guineas on Lewis, who was well-

known to be the inferior of Kitchener, commonly called 'The Banbury Ostrich.' After this prelude, the prisoner offered to sell Mr. Cotton half his bet for twenty-five guineas, ready money. Believing he had to deal with a man of honour, Mr. Cotton gave the prisoner the money; but it turned out that no such match between the two pedestrians had been arranged, or even contemplated, and that no such bet had been made. By this fraudulent act the prisoner rendered himself liable to transportation for seven years (by 30 G. 2. c. 24) for obtaining money under false pretences.

"But he was now placed in the dock, charged with a capital offence.

"After he had been thus tricked out of his twenty-five guineas, Mr. Cotton did not see the prisoner for six weeks, when, chancing with him in the Strand in the afterpart of the day, he asked him to return his money. The prisoner with extreme plausibility represented that he had not been intentionally guilty of misleading his friend, for that he had himself been imposed upon by false information about the match; that he was unable to repay the twenty-five guineas on the spot, but would bring the money to Mr. Cotton in the morning. The prisoner's explanation so far satisfied his victim, that the two shook hands, and walked off together to dine at Bulstrode's Coffee-House at the corner of Tavistock Street, Covent Garden. After dining at Bulstrode's, they went off to the Haymarket Theatre, whence they passed on to other places of amusement, returning to Bulstrode's at midnight, for another bottle, although both of them had already taken more wine than they could well bear. On waking up next morning at his lodgings in Piccadilly, whither he proceeded straight in a hackney coach after leaving Bulstrode's at one A.M., Mr. Cotton found that his pocket

had been picked of a purse containing notes and gold, to the amount of seventy-five guineas. He immediately suspected the prisoner of being the thief; and his suspicion was confirmed by the fact that Herbert Andrews did not fulfil his promise to call during the day, and pay the twenty-five guineas. Mr. Cotton remembered feeling the purse when he entered 'Bulstrode's' at midnight.

"Fortunately, Mr. Cotton had the numbers of his notes; and in the course of ten days, one of them, on being presented at the Bank of England, was stopped and traced to a West End jeweller, who said it had been paid to him by a man, an unknown customer, whose description (given by the tradesman) so closely resembled the appearance of Herbert Andrews, that a warrant was forthwith obtained to apprehend him, and search his chambers in the Temple. The result of the search was that the officers found the prosecutor's purse and notes in the prisoner's desk.

"Besides Mr. Cotton, the jeweller and the officers gave evidence for the prosecution.

"DEFENCE—The prisoner's defence was ingenious; and was made with the subtlety of an adept rogue, and the eloquence of an advocate. He complained that the learned counsellor for the prosecution had unfairly dragged into his speech the affair of the pretended walking match, as it had nothing to do with the point at issue, and could only have been mentioned with a view to prejudice the jury against him. He maintained that, instead of intentionally injuring Mr. Cotton in that particular, he had himself been the dupe of a cheat; and he reminded the jury that his explanation of that matter (by the prosecutor's own admission) had been so satisfactory to Mr. Cotton, that they spent the evening together as friends. Since Mr. Cotton was satisfied, the jury

ought to be satisfied also. As to the prosecutor's purse and money, the prisoner assured the jury that they had been given to him by the prosecutor who (after hearing that he, the prisoner, was in urgent pecuniary difficulties) forgave him the debt of twenty-five guineas, and made him a present of both purse and money. This gift was made shortly after dinner, as they strolled under the Covent Garden Piazza. Mr. Cotton first took from his purse a note and several guineas, and then said to him, 'Here Andrews, take the purse, and forget about the other money. I don't like to see a friend in trouble. What's in the purse, together with the twenty-five, will make a hundred guineas. If ever you become a rich man, you may repay me. But I give you the money, for so long as you are poor.' This took place on their way to the theatre, when Mr. Cotton was sober enough to know what he was about. Consequently Mr. Cotton could not have felt his purse in his pocket on re-entering Bulstrode's at midnight. Unfortunately there was no witness to the gift, which was made under the dim lamps of the Piazza.

"Such was his version of the affair. But if the jury preferred accepting Mr. Cotton's statement, that the purse was in his pocket when he returned to Bulstrode's, he (the prisoner) had one or two points to bring to their attention. He should call the waiter (Edward Smith) and the porter (Isaac Knox) of Bulstrode's Coffee House, who would prove that when he and Mr. Cotton returned to that place of entertainment, the latter was heavy with drink, that after taking one more glass of wine he fell asleep, and that at one o'clock, A.M. he (the prisoner) assisted Edward Smith and Isaac Knox to put the gentleman in the hackney-coach,—the coachman (a man well-known at Bulstrode's) undertaking to see

him into his lodgings. When Mr. Cotton was driven from the coffee-house, he was utterly insensible from drink. That being the case, even if the jury should believe him guilty of taking the purse, they could not find him guilty of the capital offence,—but only of a minor offence, which would give him benefit of clergy.

“The prisoner proceeded to explain to the jury that the statute which made the offence of privately stealing from the person an unclergyable felony, ‘was only meant to protect persons who were obliged to go into public assemblies, such as churches, courts, and markets, and whose persons thereby became exposed to the attempts of pickpockets, and that it did not apply to persons who by intoxication had exposed themselves to the dangers of depredation, having voluntarily destroyed those faculties of the mind by the exertion of which the larceny might probably have been prevented.’ In support of this view, he cited a case, where at the February, 1782, Sessions of the Old Bailey, ‘an indictment was preferred, charging the prisoner with having stolen a watch from Thomas Sheridan, privately from his person and without his knowledge. The prosecutor in that case had been drinking at a public-house with the prisoner, and being both of them much intoxicated, they went together to the prisoner’s lodgings, where the prosecutor fell asleep, and while he was asleep the prisoner stole his watch. The court ruled this not to be such a stealing privately as would oust the offender from the benefit of clergy, within the meaning of the legislature; and mentioned the following case having been decided by the judges:—A person who had become intoxicated at Vauxhall Gardens, fell asleep on his way home, in one of the watch-houses or niches on Westminster Bridge. A waiter, also passing from Vauxhall

that way, stole the buckles out of his shoes without waking him; and the judges were of opinion that the statute was intended to protect the property which persons by proper vigilance and caution should not be enabled to secure; but that it did not extend to persons who by intoxication had exposed themselves to the dangers of depredation, by destroying those faculties of the mind by the exertion of which the larceny might probably have been prevented. In this case the jury found the prisoner guilty of stealing,—but not privately from the person.’ Therefore, the prisoner (Herbert Andrews) ingeniously argued:—If the jury accepted his statement of the facts as true, then they must conclude that the purse and money had come into his possession by the gift of the prosecutor, and no offence whatever had been committed. But if, on the contrary, they believed the prosecutor, who had sworn that the purse was taken from his possession after his return to Bulstrode’s coffee-house, then the offence was not, in the eye of the law, the crime of ‘privately stealing from the person,’ but simply that of stealing property which the prosecutor had exposed to depredation, by destroying those faculties of the mind by the exertion of which the larceny might have been prevented. The fervid appeal to the feelings of the jury with which Herbert Andrews concluded this subtle defence created a manifest impression on all his hearers, including the twelve gentlemen of the box.

“*Witnesses for the Defence.*—Edward Smith and Isaac Knox gave conclusive evidence of the facts required of them for sustaining the defence; and they were in no way shaken by cross-examination.

“*Reply of Counsel for the Prosecution.*—The learned counsel, with much emotion, commenced his reply by

saying that he should be sorry to bear too hardly on a man in the prisoner's position of degradation ; he (the learned counsel) had frequently met the prisoner in society, and dined with him at the tables of mutual friends ; but he would not allow private considerations to make him forgetful of public duty. After wiping his eyes, the eloquent advocate drew the attention of the jury to the weak points of the prisoner's subtle argument, which aimed at driving them to one of the two alternatives—acquittal, or a verdict of ' guilty ' of a minor offence. For his part, the learned counsel regretted that he saw no necessity for accepting either of these alternatives. As for the prisoner's bold statement that the money was a gift, it was simply preposterous and audacious. Could the jury believe that any man of intelligence, like the prosecutor, would perform so generous an act, and then forget it again immediately ? Could any one of the jurymen imagine himself giving the large sum of a hundred pounds to a friend in difficulties one day, and on the next day being utterly oblivious of it ? The mere suggestion of such a case excited derision. As to the shelter which the culprit sought from the consequences of heinous crime, in the case of a poor waiter who had pilfered a pair of shoe-buckles from a tipsy reveller, the jury would remember the difference between the two thieves, and also between their victims. On the one hand, there was an ignorant menial purloining articles of trifling value from a drunken wayfarer, whom he probably had never seen before ; on the other hand, there was a man of education filching the full purse of a man whom he *called his friend* !—a friend, indeed, from whom he had privately extracted money by fraudulent pretences !—a friend to whom he possibly had administered drugged

liquor, in order that he might have him the more completely at his mercy. Far be it from him (in his honest endeavours for the public weal) to aim at crushing a wretch in the prisoner's condition of abject humiliation! He would not exhort the jury to regard the prisoner as utterly unworthy of credence; for he was not yet formally found guilty, and, by a humane maxim of the law, every accused person was to be regarded as innocent until there was clear proof of his guilt. It would, however, be absurd for the jury to place the same reliance on the sworn statements of a gentleman of property, such as Mr. Richard Cotton, and on the daring assertions and crafty suggestions of a gambler and adventurer, defending himself against a capital charge. Still, in magnanimous generosity to the prisoner, let them believe a portion—not *all* (to do so would be unjust to society), but a portion—of the culprit's statements. Mr. Richard Cotton might possibly have been mistaken in thinking that he felt his purse in his pocket on returning to Bulstrode's coffee-house. Let them, then, believe the prisoner's assertion, that the purse came into his possession at an early hour of the evening, in the Piazza of Covent Garden, when, *by the prisoner's own showing*, Mr. Cotton was perfectly sober. But *how* did that pocket-book pass into the possession of the prisoner? Mr. Cotton had sworn that it was never given; and surely a gentleman of unimpeachable veracity and great landed estate was worthy of some credence, when so much had been given to the assertions (unsustained by evidence) of a dicing adventurer. Putting the two versions together, therefore, the jury would come to the conclusion that the prisoner had stolen the purse from the prosecutor when the latter was quite sober. After again

assuring the twelve gentlemen in the box that, far from desiring to bear hardly on the prisoner, he wished to give him every fair chance of escape, the learned counsel left the case in their hands.

"Summing up.—Mr. Justice Todmuddle briefly placed the facts of the case before the jury, concluding his address with a compliment to the counsel for the prosecution on the unflinching firmness with which he had discharged a painful duty to the public, and the generous leniency he had displayed to the prisoner.

"Verdict.—After retiring from court for an hour's deliberation, the jury re-entered the court, and the foreman pronounced the verdict of 'guilty' of the capital offence, adding, in behalf of the prisoner, a strong recommendation to mercy."

Having read this interesting trial through, from beginning to end, Alec Barber laid down the book, and rubbed his hands with glee.

"A charming case! a sweet case!" said Alec, assuming a critical tone. "I should like to have known that counsel for the prosecution. He and I should have hit it off to a T. How he must have been put out by that recommendation to mercy—in behalf of an *old friend!* Mr. Justice Todmuddle, too, must have been a nice fellow! And to think that I, close upon twenty-seven years after that trial, should have made the acquaintance of Herbert Andrews, *alias* William Newton, *alias* Mr. Braddock! No doubt Mr. Justice Todmuddle is dead. Very likely the counsel for the prosecution is dead too. But Herbert Andrews is alive, and so am I—and we'll have a nice little tussle one of these fine days! By Jove, this affair will put me on my legs. Wont the King's Heath men just open their eyes with astonishment? Just as they think I am all going to smash—

I'm dropping in for a fortune. But I wont be in a hurry about it. Alec wont pluck his fruit till it's at its ripest!—Ah! ah! Luck runs with us Barbers strangely! What a future I have before me! Before three years are over, I'll leave this pestiferous swamp, which isn't fit for anybody but Mrs. Alec to live in; and I'll rent one of the finest farms in all the 'light lands,' and keep the best racers in the two counties. As for pottering about the corn-country, picking up beggarly five-pound notes at little sniggering pitch-and-toss steeple-chases—I'll go to Jericho sooner. What a conclusion to Alec Barber's career it would be for him to have a horse that wins the Derby, while Lord Taran-flit's best horse runs in a good second!—Ah! that would just be a poem!"

CHAPTER XVI.

NEW ASPECTS OF ALEC BARBER.

ADELAIDE TURRETT returned from Merton-Piggott to Castle Hollow so much benefited by her ten days' stay in Basingbourne House, that Edgar (who, during his aunt's absence, had been assiduous in his attendance on the Squire) felt that he might leave home for the corn-country. His aunt suggested that he should take his customary December trip to that district. Her aims had always been to make him content with country life; and as she had too much good sense to suppose it possible that a young man, endowed with a strong constitution and energetic temperament, could be satisfied with tranquil existence in a secluded country house, she constantly encouraged him to pursue his pleasures away from Castle Hollow. It was better (the unselfish woman thought) that she should be without the enjoyment of his company, and that he should spend rather too much time amongst the sporting squires of the corn-country, than that feeling himself chained to Castle Hollow and Battistow, he should mope about—weary of

home, and bored by an old grandfather and spinster aunt.

In the old time the home-loving squires and yeomen of the corn-country were wont to have a succession of steeple-chases in the last month of the year (before the setting in of winter frost), and another series of steeple-chases during the spring, when there was no danger that their arrangements would be set aside by snow and ice. For several years these cross-country races have been discontinued ; but at one time they were so general that there was not a village in the corn-country more than ten miles distant from some place which had its two yearly steeple-chases. In many instances, the sport illustrated the etymology of the word, and the running was made from one village church to another and back again. For affairs of the kind, they were sociable and pleasant gatherings. After the grand cross-country race of the day, hurdle races (and very generally a donkey race, for a finish up) were ridden at the place of meeting, which was either a parish common or a squire's park ; and to witness the trials two or three thousand persons would come together from the surrounding towns and villages. An ordinary wedding trip with the humbler lasses of the region was to the nearest race-course,—to see the gentry and join in the merry-making of the rustic crowd who assembled on such occasions. For the most part, the contending horses were well known throughout the country range, and the best riders were the squires and yeomen resident in the land round about, and a few gentlemen who (like Edgar) came over regularly from outlying districts.

Before their general discontinuance, there is no doubt that these races did much harm and no good,

having ceased to afford recreation to respectable people, and merely affording sharpers and blacklegs of the lowest grade of rustic immorality the means of pursuing their rascally vocations. It is well, therefore, that they were done away with ; but in the days before their demoralization they were hearty, manly features of old-world country life, and without regarding them affectionately no reader can have a complete knowledge of all that was pleasant and commendable in the ways of generations who have long since disappeared from a picturesque and happy quarter of Old England.

It was to the December races of the corn-country that Edgar Turrett, obeying his aunt's suggestions without reluctance, started in the early part of the month. Of course, before he turned his back on the 'light lands,' he paid several visits to Gray Street, and eventually set out on his excursion with a kiss from Carry (to keep off 'the evil eye') and an earnest entreaty from the young lady that he would take great care of himself. And occasion may be here taken to impress on readers that, throughout his engagement to Carry, Edgar allowed nothing to make him remiss in his attentions to her. After a long day's hunting, he thought little of mounting a fresh horse and riding away again, in order that he might present himself in Martha's drawing-room for an hour's chat with the girl whom he loved—as simple, honest gentlemen love their first loves. The frequency with which people of the 'light lands' saw the young Squire galloping across the heaths in the direction of Merton-Piggott was the cause of much sly and humorous gossip. "Whose likeness have you come across to-day, good man?" farmers' wives would ask of husbands, just come back from market. "Ord's heart,

I just caught sight of young Squire Turrett chiveying along as if the old 'un was behind him," the good man would answer. Whereto reply would be made "Ay, ay, then, don't trouble yourself to say which way the young gentleman's horse's head was set?" To which, rejoinder would be made, "Not so sharp, not so sharp, old lady. The young Squire could not ride to Merton-Piggott unless he rode away from it too." Whereupon, if she had very high conversational powers, the shrewd dame would replicate, "True, true—the road back'ards leads to the road forrards; but young men mostly ride out a-woosing by daylight, when all the world is looking; and go home by dark, when there's none to see!" But such prattle, if he had heard it, would have merely encouraged Edgar to persist in a line of action which enabled him to boast that he had, on one occasion, ridden a hundred miles for the sake of seeing Carry five minutes.

Edgar had written to his friends in the 'corn-country,' announcing his approach, and entering 'Black Baron' for five steeple-chases, which were to be run the ensuing fortnight; and having sent that redoubtable steed on to the Crown Inn, Marlowe, under the care of his groom, he rode a hackney, which he had recently purchased, towards the scene of the first contest. On his way to Marlowe, when he was within two miles of that sleepy little town, he met with an accident. With a fondness (not uncommon amongst men of his degree and generation) for buying horse-flesh under difficulties, with a view to correct its moral and physical defects by diet, discipline, medicine, and hot irons, Edgar had picked up the mare on which he was mounted for a sum under twenty guineas, and was bent on doctoring and riding her, till he should double her first value. A man

with 'Black Baron' to win steeple-chases stood in no fear of being laughed at because he chose to mount an arrant screw. So the young Squire rode his ill-favoured hackney across country, in the highest possible humour with her bad qualities, amusing himself with anticipations of the searching criticism she would elicit from his friends at Marlowe. But it was fated that he should not ride into the Crown yard on her back.

To make a short cut for the town, the rider put her at a fence, and cantered her over a piece of heavy plough-land, and three or four small enclosures of pasture, taking the low fences and narrow ditches as they came. The leaps were mere child's play; a school-boy on a Shetland pony would have laughed at them; but the last and most contemptible of them brought the young Squire to grief. A broken hedge, standing on a rotten bank, was the last of the leaps; and the mare (instead of springing clean over it), notwithstanding the cry and dig of the spur, with which she was put at it, scrambled and blundered to the top of the bank, and rolled over upon the grass-verge of the Marlowe turnpike road.

Here was an ignominious catastrophe for the heir of Castle Hollow.

He did not let go the bridle-rein, for he had some experience in what Mr. Assheton Smith called the 'art of tumbling,' and speedily picked himself up; but the first step he set with his right foot gave him excruciating pain,—pain, however, surpassed by that which he experienced in his shoulder of the same side. Fortunately the mare was unhurt, and having regained her legs, was standing quietly near him.

To walk he was unable; and when he got the mare into the right position, and endeavoured to mount

again, the pain in his shoulder prevented him from effecting his object.

At this crisis a gig turned the corner of the Marlowe Road, and Alec Barber drove up, with a lad by his side.

"Ah! Squire Turrett," cried Alec, "what's the matter?—come to grief?—are you hurt, sir?—let me help you, sir?"

"This brute," returned Edgar, "has tumbled me over, Alec, and, confound it, I must have put my shoulder out, and sprained my ankle. Just jump out and give me a lift into the saddle."

"Quick as the word, Squire," replied Mr. Barber, giving the reins to his boy, and springing from his gig with alacrity. "Now then, Squire, let see,—it's the right shoulder, is it? Wo-ho, lass. Now, sir, she's all steady. What, you can't manage it?—can't stand on your right foot?"

"Yah! it's the pain of—" muttered Edgar, when he had ground his teeth, and turned white in the face.

"There's no way for you, Squire, but to let my lad here take the mare into Marlowe, and have me drive you to the 'Crown.'—I can lift you into the gig right enough. And then we'll get the Marlowe doctor to you before you can count a brace of shakes."

"Thank you, Alec, that would be the best plan."

So Alec's proposal was acted upon, and with some difficulty Edgar was lifted into the gig.

"Drive gently, Alec," cried Edgar, when the King's Heath man had started off at the rate of twelve miles an hour. "It jars the shoulder. There, that's better. Market gardener's pace is the best. You going to put up at the 'Crown?'"

"No, no, Squire," was the modest reply, "a poor King's Heath man doesn't go to the best hotel at race times. I've got my bed ready for me at the 'Bell.' But I'll look after you, Squire, if you'll let me."

"All right, Alec. By the way, how's Mrs. Barber?"

"Thank you, Squire,—Mrs. Barber is smiling, which is a state of things she has to bless you for, Mr. Turrett. She's a right good woman of a prime sort is Christina; and please the pigs, now I've got her living with me in the eyes of the world, I'll make her a right good husband."

"That's right, Alec. But how about business? Have you a horse in for any of the races?"

"Well, Squire, I'm going to try my luck with a new 'un. At least, he's entered, and I've laid a little money on him."

"I had hoped to do something with 'Black Baron,' but this infernal topple will spoil my game. I must scratch him off the list, and that's a nuisance,—for I had put one or two little sums on him."

"Not much, Squire, I hope?"

"No, not much. Heavy business isn't in my line. But it'll be as good as fifty out of my pocket."

"(Emphatic expression), don't scratch, Squire,—anyhow not till the last moment! Somebody 'll turn up who can canter the 'Baron' over the ground, and leastways show his paces."

"Pshaw! man, you don't think I'd trust just any one with him?"

"Well, Squire, you'd trust a man like me, wouldn't you?"

"Ay! ay! Alec, but you must look after your own business."

"That's true, sir. But don't scratch till to-morrow morning. When I get to the 'Bell,' I shall learn what men are coming into town; and if I can get a man as good as myself, you can then decide whether you'll give him a fiver to keep the 'Baron's' head straight."

On reaching Marlowe, Alec assisted Edgar to the sofa of a private room in the 'Crown Inn,' and then went off to summon the doctor, and put up his trap at the 'Bell Inn.'

Fortunately the Marlowe surgeon was at home; and before an hour had passed, Edgar had ascertained that the sum of his injuries stood thus—right shoulder dislocated, right ankle badly sprained;—had had the dislocation reduced, and fomentations applied to the ankle;—and had moreover been put to bed, in the best chamber of the inn. The doctor ordered the young Squire to take nothing stronger than broth till he should see him on the following morning. But Edgar, relying on intimate personal knowledge of his own constitution, disregarded the direction; and having eaten three mutton chops, and drunk a stiff tumbler of brandy and water, he was lying on his bed, watching the candles and the race list by turns—feeling as valiant, as if no accident had befallen him,—when at eight o'clock, P.M., the 'boots' knocked at the door and said that Mr. Barber was below, in the coffee-room, drinking with some gentlemen, and had sent to inquire how Mr. Turrett felt himself.

"Show Mr. Barber upstairs," was Edgar's answer to this message.

In another minute Alec made his appearance.

Alec's manner to his patrons, who were members of country 'quality,' was very different from his manner to those whom he deemed his inferiors. He showed them great deference,—never, even in moments of excitement, presuming to address them as equals. No, no,—Alec Barber knew his place, and never spoke to lord or baronet without giving him the full ring of his title,—never accosted the possessor or heir of a landed estate (worth a thousand a-year) without calling him 'Squire.' The man prided himself on knowing how to treat 'gentry.' "Hang it!" he would say to his nearest associates with characteristic pride, "I ought to know how to treat gentlemen; for I was brought up amongst them. I was reared at Sedgessock Grammar School and Cambridge, and intended for the Church! I wasn't picked up out of a stable."

Alec, therefore, as became a man conversant with the habits of 'gentry,' made a low bow on entering Edgar's chamber, and stood until he was invited to take a seat.

"Well, Squire," he said, on hearing Edgar's assurance that mutton chops and stiff brandy and water had quite ~~set~~ **set** him up, "I am glad you're getting out of your troubles so nicely,—that I am."

"Ay," was the answer, "but the worst is to come. A man with a dislocation of his right shoulder just reduced, and a badly sprained ancle, can't ride steeple-chases. It's just my luck! I won't have the Baron ridden by just any fool. Badly ridden, he'd run a risk of losing me my money, and breaking his own neck into the bargain. No, no, Alec, I know a trick worth two of that. A man 'who runs away may live to fight another day.' Black Baron must be scratched."

"I tell you what it is, Squire," replied Alec firmly, "the Baron wont be scratched ; and please the pigs, he'll not only run in first to-morrow, but will lead every running he's entered for ! I am going to ride him myself."

"But, man,—you've got a horse in the list?"

"No, sir, I haven't. This afternoon I had a young horse I was going to try my luck with ; but Phosphorus is already on his way back to 'Little Deane.'"

"The deuce he is ! Confound it, my good fellow, I see your game. You are bent on pulling me through, Alec?"

"Exactly, Squire,—that is just what I am bent on doing ! Do you think, Squire, there's no notion of the right thing in a King's Heath man ? No, no, Squire,—you pulled Christina out of the fire, and I'll be skinned purple if I don't do my best to lift 'Black Baron' over the Tailor's gap to-morrow morning in fine style. You just put him in my hands."

For a minute Edgar was silent, and then he said in a voice which showed that Alec's words had stirred that sentiment of good-fellowship which unites in friendship men of different ranks, "Alec, I can't shake hands with you on the bargain, for my right is laid fast by the doctor, and you shan't catch me offering my left to you.—But if you ever want a friend to help you at a push, Alec,—come to me."

"Thank you, Squire," returned Alec, taking from his mouth the ends of his shaggy whiskers, which he was accustomed to bite when the gentler feelings of his generous nature were excited. "Then we wont have any more words about it, Squire. You must be precious dull up here, sir. Mr. Forsdike of Stretton, and

three or four other gentlemen (friends of yours) are down stairs in the coffee-room, and they've been asking for you. Shan't I bring 'em up here, Squire? This is a big, airy room, and would bear a little tobacco smoke."

"The doctor ordered me to keep myself quiet."

"And why, Squire, shouldn't you keep yourself quiet? You don't want to make a noise, because you have four or five gentlemen talking the news to you over a cigar. The gentlemen told me to ask if you wouldn't like to have a little o' their company."

"Alec," said Edgar, after a minute's reflection, "tell Mr. Forsdike, and the other gentlemen, that I shall be happy to see them up here. Order the waiter to bring cigars and spirits;—but do you mind to come up too, Alec."

Well pleased with these arrangements—more especially with the invitation which would give him an opportunity of showing Mr. Forsdike and the other gentlemen on what good terms he was with the young Squire of Castle Hollow—Alec in less than three minutes had given directions at the bar for spirits and cigars to be taken up-stairs, and acting as Chamberlain, had conducted Mr. Forsdike and party to Edgar's room; where they made a merrier and noisier night of it than the doctor, had he been present, would have approved.

The next morning, however, Edgar awoke without headache or fever, and had it not been for his local injuries, was in every way fit to ride in the chief race of the day. As it was, he had determined to appear on the course in the phaeton which Mr. Holt of Wingfield (one of his companions of the previous evening) had placed at his service.

And by ten o'clock A.M., he found himself at the starting flag, his phaeton (by the especial courtesy of the stewards) being allowed to come within the ropes. An unusually large gathering of people, perhaps three thousand persons—were on the course,—people who had come there on horse or foot, in coach or gig, in waggon or tumbril or cart. The daughters of small farmers, brilliant with ribands and new bonnets, paraded the ground, attended by lovers who were dressed in velveteen coats, corduroy breeches, and leather gaiters ; or they were to be seen in the back-ground, seated in the straw of their tumbrils, and partaking with keen appetite of cold pies and sound home-brew. The wives and daughters of the wealthier tenant-farmers and humbler yeomanry were driven to and fro in gigs ; or in riding costumes, not of the least conspicuous sort, they came upon the ground mounted. Thirty or forty old lumbering coaches (cracked as to varnish, battered as to panels, and drawn by at least four horses—not ignorant of farm-work), containing ladies and children, testified to the presence of the ' quality ' of the district ; whilst here and there an equipage of modern style elicited the admiration of gazers. For instance, Sir Fred Tyler's four-in-hand and glittering liveries were allowed to be superb.

The King's Heath men were present in strong force ; and as they rode their mettlesome cattle to and fro, or smoking cigars stood talking with the squires and yeoman-gentry, they were eyed with envy and admiration by the idler and younger of the inferior farmers, whose intercourse with ' quality ' was confined to rent-day transactions, and chance words spoken in the hunting-field. The keen-witted adventurers, who throughout the ' corn-country ' were known

as King's Heath men, were far from estimable members of society; Alec Barber was the representative member of the fraternity—being their superior in appearance, address, and education. Too demoralized for honest industry, and too clever at once to sink from want of it into extreme poverty, these fellows lived by their wits, —a source of livelihood which their admirers knew little of. For nine months of each year they kept in the 'light lands,'—subsisting as they best could as betting-men, dealers, breeders, jobbers, breakers. Some of them (like Alec) occupied small patches of marsh-land, where they reared young horse stock, and passed their time when 'turf events' did not call them to King's Heath or the minor race-courses. But season after season they went the round of the corn-country steeple-chases,—ready to bet with young farmers, or ride in races, or get up matches. Where they came from, or whither they went, their best patrons of the 'corn country' had no more exact knowledge than that which could be gathered from the avowal, constantly coming from their lips, that they were—King's Heath men. In a vulgar horsey way, they were always well-dressed, and very generally they were well-mounted; but whether their horses and clothes were their own, the heavy-land squires, who used them as agents or jockeys, never cared to inquire. On the eve of the steeple-chases they came, riding or driving, out of the 'light lands;' on the close of the steeple-chases they went back, riding or driving, into the 'light lands.' The squirarchy neither knew nor cared to know more of them.

But the young farmers and idlers-upon-village of the 'corn country' were more curious. To them the King's Heath man was a mysterious and fasci-

nating character. The King's Heath man always had money in his pocket for wine and cigars, when poor tenant-farmers had to be content with Hollands or ale, and a pipe of tobacco. The King's Heath man rode up to squires and conversed with them, just for all the world as if he were equal to the best of them. The King's Heath man talked with a smartness, and swore with a piquancy, and bandied jokes with a brilliancy, altogether beyond the powers of corn-country agriculturists! What marvel, then, that such men did much mischief in the quiet districts which they periodically visited; and that their conduct, more than any other influence, tended to demoralize the old-world races of the county side?

To the simple believers in King's Heath men, Alec Barber was a demigod. "Ord's life!" his adorers used to say, "Mr. Alec is a gentleman born. His father was one of the leading turf-men at King's Heath; and he was eddicated, along with the gentry, at King's Heath. For the matter of training, he might be a parson any day he liked, and he *is* a gentleman!—look at his boots, look at his breeches, look at his whiskers, look at his cattle, look at his get up! And just hear him talk! He doesn't wait till Sir Frederick Tyler speaks to him; but he rides straight up to Sir Frederick with 'a good morning, Sir Frederick, glad to see our patrons stick to us!' Then just see him at an inn, ordering a bottle of wine! 'Landlord,' says he, 'another bottle of sherry, here's a gentleman wants a glass.' 'The best wine?' asks the landlord. '(Emphatic expression) the best wine, landlord? You can't know me. I am Alec Barber, of King's Heath, and never drink any but the very best wine!' Ord's life! he's down upon them like a needle!"

When, therefore, it was understood that Alec Barber would ride Mr. Turrett's horse, 'Black Baron' rose in the general favour. The horse was known to be one of the best entered for the race; and Alec's power to lift a horse over the ground was held to be the chief of his many rare good qualities. The King's Heath men were not pleased with the arrangement. "What's Alec's little game?" inquired Ned Rastrick of Jack Ruggett, another of the fraternity. "Gad," answered Jack, "skin me purple, and I couldn't tell you! He had entered Phosphorus, and laid upon him, too, something heavy. Crucify me, but I know he'd made up his mind that he was going to head the running;—when he comes upon the young Squire, just after his topple, drives him into Marlowe, scratches Phosphorus, sends him off home that very night, and now he's going to do the needful by Black Baron." "He might," observed Ned Rastrick, "have minded his own business, and left the job for a friend." "He'd better," replied Jack, "have kept to his first game, and not have flung every King's Heath man's book out of gear." "Ah," said Ned Rastrick, assuming a moral tone, "Alec always was a man for sticking up to the nobs. He's always for licking the mud off a squire's tops. I can't bear such ways! That's what I say!"

There were twelve horses at the starting flag,—the favourites being 'Black Baron,' and Mr. Archer's horse 'Musgrove.'

"All right, Squire," said Alec, standing in jockey-costume, with one speckless boot resting on the step of Mr. Holt's phaeton, whilst he had a last few words with the owner of 'Black Baron,' before mounting, "there's just the right number, and no more. Thirteen would

have been unlucky. There are only twelve of us ; so nobody's neck 'll be broken this time."

"How's time?" asked Edgar, fidgeting with excitement.

"Just two minutes to the first bell. So, Squire, tell the man to drive you into the next meadow, and draw up near the gap, so you may see the start, and the three first leaps. We shan't be many minutes before we are back to you."

"Well, good luck to you, Alec! Take care of yourself."

"I'll take care of the Baron, Squire, and shan't trouble about myself," replied Alec, turning away.

Whereupon Edgar was driven off to the gap.

He heard the first bell ring. He heard the second bell, and then the third. The next moment the red flag fell, and that signal was followed by a rushing of a hollow sound over the turf between the ropes. Good! it was no false start. On they came, sweeping in a pack, at a rapid canter, 'Musgrove' third, 'Black Baron' last, and as Alec let him spring over the gap, he waved his right hand cheerily to the young Squire. The start, however, was nothing; the work would not begin till the heavy ploughed fields were reached. When he had seen the last of Black Baron's heels, who took the third leap hindmost still, Edgar turned to look at the course, which was in a state of lively commotion,—farmers getting excited about the badness of the Baron's start, King's Heath men slipping about on the look-out for bets, and those of the gentry and yeomanry, who were mounted, galloping off along the line of running, to see more of the sport.

To Edgar minutes were hours, as he sat fuming and chafing in his carriage, till his watch told him

that the leading horses must appear again in sixty seconds. Another minute—and two horses, 'Black Baron' and 'Musgrove,' leaped No. 3 fence and ditch. In the distance they appeared to be neck and neck; but it was soon apparent that 'Musgrove' was slightly ahead of his competitor. On they swept at a grand gallop,—at a pace marvellous for horses bred for other uses than mere speed, that had already been straining across five or six miles of the stiffest soil of the 'corn-country.' At the gap they were neck and neck. Alec had too much to do now, to wave his whip to Edgar; but for an instant he turned his white face and black whiskers towards the young Squire. "Oh! I could bring him in!" cried Edgar, lifting his right arm in its sling. The words had scarcely passed his lips, when 'Black Baron' sprung up with a bound, as though a current of new force had suddenly passed into his frame, and with a half-a-dozen springs—the springs of a race-horse rather than a hunter—put himself a full length before 'Musgrove.' Alec knew the horse as well as his master knew him; and the art with which the noble creature had been inspired to this last spurt was complete.

"Drive to the flag," cried Edgar, to the coachman.

On reaching the flag, the first object which met Edgar's eyes was 'Black Baron,' unsaddled, and in the hands of his groom, who was washing his nostrils and mouth with cold water; the second object to attract the young Squire's attention was Alec Barber, slightly agitated in appearance, but in reality as cool and wide-awake as he would have been in his parlour at Little Deane.

"Alec,—he was first?" asked Edgar.

"First?" responded the rider quickly.—"Of course, he was first, Squire! You didn't think he was going to be last, did you?"

"You rode him, Alec, just as I should have ridden him,—at least, as I should have tried to ride him."

"Well, Squire, I tried to ride him like you; and then I knew I couldn't go wrong."

"I wish I had known what he was going to do a little sooner," muttered Jack Ruggett to Ned Rastrick, "and then I could have made a book. I hedged the very minute I heard that he was going to take the horse in hand. How the deuce should I know what he was after?"

"He'll make a nice thing out of young Squire Turrett," was Ned's reply.

"Likely enough; the lease of a farm I shouldn't wonder."

The service done on that day Alec repeated for his patron at each of the four following steeple-chases for which the horse was entered. Each of the races was another victory for 'Black Baron.' Naturally Edgar was in the highest spirits, and in the best possible humour with the jockey. In his progress through the 'corn country,' he took Alec about with him, treating him as friend rather than client; procuring him invitations to bachelors' dinners at the halls of country squires, and introducing him to the 'quality.' Of course, the young Squire made no attempt to bring him into the presence of county ladies; but he got him a bed for a couple of nights at Elton Abbey, Lady Elton and her daughters being away from home. And he was driven about from place to place by Alec, in the spidery gig.

In short, a strong league was formed between

Alexander Barber, Farmer, Little Deane, near Easthaven, and Edgar Turrett, Esquire, of the Hollow House, Castle Hollow. On the one hand was a country gentleman, who prided himself on his sound practical common sense; on the other, a King's Heath blackleg, whose rule it was to come down on his acquaintance like a needle. The course of this history will show to which of the two the compact proved more profitable.

At the termination of 'the season,' on the day when Edgar (able again to mount his horse) turned his back on the 'corn-country,' and set his face towards home for the Christmas week, the patron and client parted on most affectionate terms.

"Now, Alec," said the young Squire, on taking leave, "you mayn't go Easthaven way with an empty purse. I have pocketed (or you have for me) close on £150; and the trip has one way or other cost me £50. Here, man, take the other £100, and buy Christina a new bonnet."

The reader must bear in mind that the stakes and prizes at these old-world races were very low; fifteen or twenty pounds to the winner being the usual reward of victory.

"Skin me blue, Squire," returned Alec,—“if I touch a blessed guinea! I haven't been pulling you through for the sake of that!”

"Nonsense, man; you live by this sort of thing. I may not take up your time and skill without paying you."

"Christina would never let me hear the end of it, if I took your money, Squire."

"Then don't tell her."

"Not tell her?—Squire, you'd be the death of conubial confidence!"

"Well," said Edgar, doggedly, "she may please herself with liking it or disliking it;—I mean you to take this money."

"Squire," responded Alec, "don't cut up rough. Since you will be for paying me, let's put it this way: you've paid everywhere for me all the season, and treated me like a gentleman, to boot; and I've ridden five races for you, with uncommon good luck. Thanks to your horse! Well, pay the jockey £20, and you'll have done the handsome thing by him."

"You're a queer fellow, to refuse a pot of money that falls in your way."

"Not so queer as you think, Squire," replied Alec, with fine feeling. "You may trust me, Squire, when I say I am not the only King's Heath man with a heart set in the right place—a heart, too, that's uncommon like those which the Almighty has been pleased to give you gentry!"

"Come then, Alec, meet me half way. You take fifty, and leave me the rest."

After a further display of reluctance, Alec acceded to this proposal, putting the notes into his pocket with a declaration that he wished they might turn to tinder before ever he looked at them again.

Edgar returned to Castle Hollow, with a favourable opinion of Alec Barber. But when he recounted to Aunt Adelaide his adventures in the 'corn-country,' and the strange intimacy that had suddenly sprung up between him and Christina's husband, the timid lady turned pale, and trembled. She said nothing, however, to dissuade him from holding close intercourse with a man whose name had to her mind associations of horror. Indeed, what could she have said to that end, which would not have informed her

nephew of an occurrence which she was especially desirous should never come to his knowledge ?

As for Alec, he made good speed to Little Deane, communing with himself on the good luck which had befallen him. "Yes, Master Alec," he observed to himself, "you've made a very neat job of it! You've got inside the skin of that youngster's heart; and, on the whole, you find yourself very comfortable there. Now, my boy, look sharp! Pursue your investigations up in London, and in due course you'll be what the diplomatists call—master of the position. That fifty pounds you've fobbed from young Hopeful's winnings will come in very handy for your investigations. But you were quite right, my boy, to stand out for not taking the whole hundred. By-and-by you'll not be so squeamish. I shouldn't wonder, if one of these days you ask for it with interest—yes, my dear boy, *with interest!*"

On his way through Easthaven, Alec drew up at the post-office, and asking for his letters received four. Three of them had been lying there for ten days; the fourth, sealed with black wax, had arrived that morning.

It was dark when Alec received the letters, but he did not continue his journey to Little Deane until he had read them. Standing in the public room of the post-office he opened the packets, and quickly perused their contents. The note bearing the black seal, he read last; and as he thrust it into his waistcoat there was an expression of surprise and concern on his face.

Then once more Alec Barber jumped into his spidery gig, and he did not again draw rein till his fast and high-couraged horse had brought him to his own house at

Little Deane, where Christina, in anticipation of his coming, had provided an excellent hot supper.

When that repast, at which Alec's deportment to his wife was unusually amiable, had come to a conclusion, he drew his chair to the blazing fire, and entertained Christina with a narrative of his movements in the corn-country,—or rather, of so much of his movements as he deemed it advisable to communicate to her. How he had fallen in with the young Squire at Marlowe, and ridden his horse for him at a succession of steeple-chases; how they had made the journey through the 'corn-country' in the same gig, and become fast friends; how the young Squire had introduced him to various influential gentlemen of the 'heavy lands;' how he (Alec) had slept at Elton Abbey, and taken his wine with 'the quality,' as if he belonged to the best of them; and how the young Squire, on bidding him farewell, had begged to be remembered to Mrs. Barber.

All this, and much more, Alec communicated to Christina with such unusual urbanity, that she was in her secret heart both surprised and puzzled by his manner. It was so rare for him to address her, except with gibes and coarse sarcasm, that the kindness, which most wives would have received as a matter of course, created astonishment and perplexity in her. His conciliatory tone caused her as much uneasiness as gratification.

Having brought his gossip to an end, Alec lit his pipe: and for the next five minutes he and his wife sat in silence without exchanging a word. At length, she took courage, and looking straight into his face, said—

"Alec?"

"Well, Chrissy—I am with you. What is it?"

"The young Squire saved my life."

"I know he did. What of that?"

"Be true to him, Alec," responded Christina, earnestly.

"He's a generous, high-spirited gentleman, ready to think the best of everybody, and trust anyone. Don't lead him wrong. Don't lead him into trouble. As you used to love me, Alec, when I was a pretty girl, long before I became the white-faced, faded, maimed thing I am now: as we have a little child, to inherit our honour and our shame,—be true to the young Squire. Don't lead him into trouble!—keep him out of it, if you can!"

"It doesn't seem much as if I wanted to rob him, does it, Chrissy?" responded Alec, with no sign of irritation.

Christina was silent.

"Here, old girl," continued Alec, with a return of an old gentleness of tone, which she hadn't heard from him for many years,—that old, old voice which had won her heart when she was an impulsive, wayward girl,—that old, old music which she had never expected to hear again,—“don't be over down-cast about it! It has gone to my heart, as sharp as it will to yours. We must go over to Harstead to-morrow on a gloomy errand.”

As he thus spoke, he took the black-sealed letter from his pocket, and gave it to Christina, who clutched it with a trembling hand, and quickly read it.

"What! dead?" she exclaimed, letting the paper fall on the ground. "Dead? And I not with her?—Oh, Alec, Alec!"

"Yes, the little one is dead. Don't take on over-much, old heart. Bear up, bear up! If you'd been

with her, you couldn't have done any good. Oh, Chrissy, we come into the world alone, to meet friends in it—and it follows, that we go out of the world alone to meet friends in the next. She was a pretty little filly, and promised to make rare running, but she's gone. Don't be downcast overmuch, Chrissy. It'll make a better man of me!"

And as Alec Barber said the last of these words in broken accents Christina knelt down by his side, putting her right arm round his waist, and burying her face in the lappets of his coat.

The next morning, the husband and wife started for Harstead, to bury the little one.

A day or two later, Mr. Shakespeare Wylie (who had conducted his troop back to their principal theatre) entered the shop of John Braddock, bookseller, Buttermarket, Sedgehassock, and having beckoned that grave and most respectable tradesman into the little parlour, behind the shop, said to him, "Christina's little girl has died of scarlatina. Poor little soul, she wasn't wanted in this world. Now there's hope for us, that we may get Christina out of that man's clutches. Here's poor Chrissy's letter,—you can read it!"

John Braddock took the proffered letter, and read it attentively.

"She says her husband has been very tender to her since the child's death," observed John Braddock, when he had deliberately perused the letter from beginning to end,—“that's a good sign!"

"It's a bad sign!" hissed the old actor. "He's an utter rascal: and the more he softens now, the harder he'll be a month hence!"

"Even bad men may take a turn for the better, Wylie!" answered the other, in his small dry voice.

No more words passed just then between the friends.

But they both put on mourning,—the great-uncle for the child whose death he had always desired; the grandfather for the little girl whom he had never seen.

It was a mournful Christmas to one household in Little Deane marshland.

It was a season of sorrow also to at least one inhabitant of the Buttermarket, Sedgehassock.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER YEAR.

THUS closed the year 1820: the year in which George the Third went to sleep with his fathers; the year which, as far as Merton-Piggott was concerned, saw the death of the 'old time' of modern English society, and the birth of 'the new.'

The year 1821 was fruitful of changes for the old county town. Dr. Magnum had well said of the new rector, "That man is thoroughly in earnest: and he is a good man. Before he has been three years in this town, he'll have wrought a revolution in it. May it be for the better! If the change be for the worse, it will not the less have been brought about by a sincere Christian." The course of the year 1821 verified the prediction, that the Rev. Spencer Reeve would introduce a new life into the old town.

Throughout the earlier part of this same 1821, 'the quality' persevered in negative opposition to the innovator. Mr. Counsellor Gnatt still objected to 'the young man's freedom of expression.' Vener-

able Mrs. Trussler put her menace into execution, and withdrawing from St. Mary's, finished her days in peace under Mr. Mopus at the inferior church of St. Peter, graciously overlooking the poverty of that good man's scholarship and family in consideration of the respect he paid to her slumbers. But every month the opposition became fainter, and the old-world party steadily became weaker. Dispersed by their despotic bishop, driven by their inexorable prelate from the whist-tables of the Assembly Rooms to the tranquillity of their parishes, the once non-resident incumbents left the town, taking away with them an important element of its 'quality' life. Captains Flewke and Bagot withdrew from a scene which had lost many of its former attractions; and Lieutenant Crockford, R.N. announced his intention to reside for the future in the neighbourhood of Exeter. For a while, Lady Farrell and Fanny Magnum did their best to keep up the monthly balls; which were doomed to fall more and more into disrepute. Anxious to increase the number of dancers, the committee extended 'the privilege' to people of a class far below 'quality,' and also made the grand mistake of accepting trousers as part of full dress costume. Under this new phase of Assembly Room life, Stephen Dowse and Mrs. Dowse were invited to the balls, and they responded by appearing at the re-unions. It would be foreign to the purpose of this work to trace the decadence of the Assembly Rooms, step by step; but a few words will not be misplaced at this point, if they indicate how the 'rooms' sunk into general contempt. The Dowses ere long contrived to open the doors to several of their private friends, and the 'Dowse set' having been admitted, every other 'set' put in claims for admission,—claims enforced by references to day-

books and ledgers, and by an unsparing use of I-am-as-good-as-you logic, of which the conclusions, subversive though they were of social order, it was very difficult to prove absurd. One barrier after another was broken down. The rule that all professional people might claim 'the privilege' as a matter of course, led to the admission of retired tradespeople; which again opened the way for tradespeople who thought of retiring from business; which again removed the exclusion from shopkeepers who had no intention whatever of retiring. When at length everybody who chose to pay the annual subscription had been admitted, nobody thought there was anything in the 'privilege' worth paying for. Again, whereas under the old system, the 'quality' waived considerations of rank on crossing the threshold of the club, under the new regime, the cliques refused to amalgamate, and the balls were made up of half-a-dozen distinct parties, the members of each 'set' dancing amongst themselves, and scowling at the members of all other 'sets.' Before half-a-dozen years had passed, the leading families of the borough and immediate vicinity had all ceased to attend the balls; and gradually the assemblies dwindled and dwindled, till they were given up. To the last, however, Stephen Dowse held on to them. He lived indeed to be regarded as a chief upholder of 'the rooms'; and in his advanced old age, he used to expatiate to his admirers on what the balls were, as he could remember them, in the 'old Duchess's time.' Indeed the bank-agent firmly believed he had been an ornament of the assemblies in their palmy days.

After leaving Merton-Piggott for Bath, on a visit alluded to in a prior part of this history, Colonel Bell never re-appeared in the 'light lands.' He played with the committee, until he ascertained that the

Dowager Duchess of Dovercourt had determined never again to keep high state at Melford House, and then he sent in his resignation of the Mastership of Ceremonies, regretting that impaired health compelled him to retire from a society in which the happiest years of his existence had been spent. The Colonel was not the only distinguished personage who played the part of a rat to the falling house of Merton-Piggott Society. As soon as the rectory had ceased to be a place of hospitable entertainment, the 'quality' of the neighbourhood no longer cared to figure at 'promenade,' or loiter in the shade of the Abbey-garden avenues. With the opening of the year 1821, the Earl and Countess of Elderberry paid their last subscriptions to 'the rooms,' requesting the committee at the same time to erase their names from the list of patrons. Within a month of the giving of that notification, the committee received similar notes from no less than twenty-six houses of the minor gentry.

In most parts of the kingdom the old-world county life died out gradually; but at Merton-Piggott, where it had been unnaturally prolonged by the Duke and Duchess of Dovercourt, it fell with a crash.

To many of the light-land grandees, his grace's death was a relief, permitting them to relinquish a kind of life which they did not altogether approve, though they did not like to set their faces against it so long as 'Melford House kept things together.' The rest, in easy humour, followed the fashion of the time—taking their wives and daughters up to town for the season, and in the summer and autumn bringing down company to their country halls; seeing less of their neighbours and more of strangers; amusing themselves and friends in their gardens, and parks, and preserves,

and leaving the people of the borough to settle the affairs of borough-life in their own way.

Of those who regarded this root-and-branch revolution with regret, the Reverend Spencer Reeve was not one.

Writing to a friend at Cambridge, in the spring of 1821, he said—"I am thankful at being able to say that I regard my work here with greater cheerfulness and hope. When I first entered the town, I found obstacles to the performance of my duty which are daily becoming of less magnitude. Latent opposition to my endeavours is diminishing, and I begin to receive co-operation from many influential inhabitants who were at first disposed to misjudge me. The death of the Duke of Dovercourt has broken up the idle world-loving coterie who long exercised an injurious influence in the place; and already the townspeople are taking an interest in other and better pursuits than card-playing and dancing. Mrs. Magnum (an amiable woman, who is the wife of the chief physician of this neighbourhood) has already undertaken to instruct a class in my Sunday schools, and as soon as I have organized a system of district visiting, she will be one of the visitors, and her influence—which is very great in the town—will, I trust, bring other ladies to my aid. In one of her younger friends I have already found an intelligent and zealous teacher in my school. This young lady is an object of lively concern to me. A very intelligent and beautiful girl, the heiress to considerable wealth, and (as I learn) endowed with a noble disposition, she is engaged to be married to Mr. Turrett, who holds a family fellowship at Hooper's Hall, and was, as you doubtless remember, one of H.'s 'set' in the university. When I tell you that if he were still in residence he would waste time, and wealth, and opportunity in a

similar coterie, I have said enough to inform you what sort of man he is. Wishing to judge him charitably I try to regard him merely as a young Squire who has unfortunately been brought up in accordance with old views, and has not sufficient enlightenment to detect the needs of his own generation. At present, he is one of the chief patrons of what the irreligious of this neighbourhood call 'sport;' and he has publicly avowed his intention to thwart me to the utmost of his power. Last year, when I expressed my disapproval of theatres, balls, and races, I gave him great offence, and he has consequently been more active than before in supporting the old worldly amusements, which are (I am thankful to say) falling more and more into general disfavour in English country-life. Last Christmas he caused his warmest friends great concern by associating himself with a steeple-chase jockey, whose character, even according to the morality of race-courses, is allowed to be infamous; and I hear that the announcements of sporting journals show that his alliance with this black-leg is most intimate. Such is the man to whom my pretty school-teacher is engaged. The engagement you will allow to be one that justifies gloomy forebodings, and you will not regard it with less astonishment, when I tell you that the young lady's father is a dissenter, who, besides possessing a spotless reputation for integrity, has for thirty years past done more than any other layman of Merton-Piggott to keep alive a spirit of religion amongst the humbler people of the 'light lands.' I cannot conceive what considerations can have induced such a man to countenance his only child's betrothal to one whose opinions are altogether opposed to his own. Ambition of alliance with an old county family can scarcely be the explanation of his conduct;

for the tenour of his benevolent and pious career is at variance with such a supposition. . Perhaps you think I devote too many words to this affair; but it is no trifling matter. The young lady's offer to work in my school is not only an indication that her heart is set upon a religious life; it shows also that I am winning favour amongst the dissenters of this place, who are very respectable and influential, and many of whom are beginning to attend occasionally the services at St. Mary's."

From this extract, readers may see how the new rector regarded his position in Merton-Piggott.

His influence was being felt.

There was much work for such a man in the old borough, of whose inhabitants 'the quality' were but a few. Hitherto this novel has only put before its readers the picturesque aspects of Merton-Piggott;—the Abbey Place, with its 'gentilitial residences,' (as they are termed in the 'Gentleman's Magazine'); the court-house, and hospital, and ample buildings surrounding the church-yard; the Abbey Gardens enlivened with well-dressed loungers; the Linnet, and the Waveney, covered with lazy barges; the straight, wide thoroughfares looked down upon by ancient mansions; the equipages of the gay 'quality'; the grandeur of the magnificent church. But the town had other aspects, other haunts, other residents, other features. It had a quarter in which only poor people lived; a quarter never penetrated by old-world 'quality.' There were alleys crossing alleys, and yards leading into yards, in that quarter where poverty was universal, fever unintermittent, misery abundant, and vice frequent.

The scant Christian charity that heretofore had

visited that unalluring quarter had for the most part been the Christian charity of 'the connexion.' Easy-going Archdeacon Lovegrove had never regarded it as a part of his duty to busy himself with the affairs of that quarter. When the poor knocked at the door of the kitchen rectory with doctors' certificates in their hands, they received soup and mutton, ale and wine, in abundance; and when the jovial archdeacon came personally in contact with the needy, he took half-crowns from his breeches-pockets, and scattered them about as though they were cheap as lozenges, instead of eight for a sovereign. But it had never occurred to him to explore the cellars and garrets of the 'poor quarter,' to talk with the sick by their bed-sides; to gather the children together in schools—where they might be taught the fear of the Lord, and trained for lives of honest industry. The honest gentleman wished 'the poor quarter' well; and every Christmas he sent his almoner into its fetid yards, to do good and distribute. But it was always by deputy, and never in his own person, that he thus alleviated the stay-at-home squalor and suffering of the repulsive district.

And in like manner had Bassingbourne House and the gentilitial residences acted towards the 'poor quarter,' blessing it from a distance, and helping it from a stand-point where they were unable to discern the help it most needed.

Some of the quality, indeed, had a vague fear that, by paying the 'poor quarter' much attention, they would be playing into the hands of the 'connexion,' and all other enemies of England's time-honoured institutions. The 'persuasion' had taken that field to themselves; and as they could not crush the 'persuasion,' they had better keep out of their

way, and leave them alone as much as possible. And so a mistaken view of their duty as good citizens kept them from doing their duty as good Christians, at times when they were prompted to go nearer to the wretched ones of the earth.

But the Reverend Spencer Reeve, as the apostle of a new order of things, from his first entry into the parish made the 'poor quarter' an object of especial care. Slow to return the courtesies of 'the quality,' he made quick response to the cries which reached him from the needy, and sick, and ignorant. His appearance in their yards and courts was, for a few weeks, a cause of surprise, and indeed of curiosity tinged by resentment; curiosity as to what he might want there, and resentment that he should come prying about in places which for many a long day had been avoided by gentry. Mr. Bicker was literally struck with consternation, when, on meeting the new rector in the most wretched alley of the town, he was then and there accosted by the stranger, and questioned as to the number of families in 'the row,' the amount of sickness in their homes, their means of subsistence, and the drainage of their locality.

Activity of this sort was one of the rector's 'strange ways,' which roused distrust of him in the breast of Mr. Counsellor Gnatt, and other members of 'the quality.' But the more enlightened dissenters, and a few families of the well-to-do tradesmen of the town, who were spoken of by the persuasionists as '*serious* church-goers,' regarded his conduct with strong approval; and as soon as he formally announced from the pulpit his intention to establish schools for the poor children of his parish, and stated that though he was willing to bear the expense of them himself, he

should still receive with great thankfulness the aid of his congregation, offers of money and help flowed in upon him from numerous quarters from which he had not anticipated support.

Amongst those who surprised the rector with prompt offers of assistance was John Bromhead, who expressed his readiness to contribute £300 to a fund raised for the purpose of building a good school-room.

The year 1821 wrought changes in the merchant's family. According to Dr. Magnum's prediction, Probity Bromhead in the early spring had another attack of the gout; an attack more severe and alarming than the visitation of the previous year. It kept him to the house for two months, once more rousing the anxiety of Mr. Stephen Dowse, and becoming a frequent topic of discussion in the town-club. Again, poor Martha was cautioned by her relative to prepare herself for the worst, and to hope that, when the worst came, she would find herself and child well provided for; and again Mr. Dowse had the delight of telling his friends that, "for his part, he never did put faith in a bright, clear complexion." The excitement outside John Bromhead's house, with regard to the gout attack of 1821, was an exact reproduction of the excitement caused by the illness of the previous year. But within the walls of the merchant's home, an observer might have detected points of difference between the two attacks, and the modes in which they were borne by the invalid. In the latter year, John Bromhead took a much more desponding view of his own case. Drawing closer in heart to his sad wife, he told her in subdued tone his apprehension that he would not outlive the period appointed for his daughter's

engagement to Edgar Turrett, and instead of avoiding religious conversations he rather invited them. Mr. Bicker was admitted to long conferences, instead of being staved off with donations; and (strange to say) Mr. Spencer Reeve, who had formed an acquaintance with the Bromhead family through the Magnums, found his way into the sick man's room, and was urgently pressed to repeat his visit by the merchant who, on the rector's departure, told Martha of the great comfort he had derived from his interview with the clergyman. Even in her deep dejection at her husband's state of health, Martha was secretly happier than she had been for many a month;—for many a year. John Bromhead was so confiding, as well as tender to her; so inspired with the old serious, earnest life of his better days; so like what he was in the far off days when she put her hand in his and promised to be his wife.

One assurance which her husband gave her at this period was a source of lively gladness to her.

"Martha," he said, in the stillness of a certain night, when the gout-attack had reached its most critical point, and Martha was keeping watch by his side.

"I thought you were asleep, husband," replied Martha, "you have been so very quiet for the last half-hour."

"I have not been asleep, Martha, I have been thinking, and I wish to tell you something."

"Yes, husband."

"I am very grateful to you, Martha, for having persuaded me to fix a long term for Carry's engagement. It's a deep source of comfort to me to know that she won't be married till she is old enough to form a mature

judgment whether she ought to become Edgar's wife. I humbly hope I have not done her wrong—I humbly hope I have not committed a grave sin against God, in listening to the voice of worldly ambition and affection, which made me (and still makes me) desire to see her the mistress of the Hollow House. If I have sinned in so doing, may God pardon me! and avert from my darling the evil consequences of my wrong doing! Bear this in mind, Martha; and if I should leave you alone in the world, and if, before Carry is married, circumstances should arise making it evident that the alliance of my planning would result in sorrow to her,—do not fail to counsel her to retire from it. Let no consideration of the fact that the alliance was planned by me, restrain you from giving her the advice which you think best for her. Martha, you have been a true wife to me in this matter, as in every other; and if I did not fear to pain you, I would ask your pardon for having so often put aside your counsel lightly.”

Whereto Martha replied, “John, the words you have just spoken shall be treasured in my heart, and shall influence me, even as your words have always influenced me.—Oh, dear John, would I had been as good a wife to you, as you have been a husband to me!”

From which exchange of words the reader may see that John Bromhead had begun to mistrust the wisdom of the arrangement which he had made for his daughter's settlement. But to Carry he never allowed this uneasiness to be manifest. To her, as well as to the outer world, he spoke with undiminished cordiality of Edgar, who discerned nothing of the trouble which was continually disturbing the merchant's peace of mind.

But of all the changes which had come over John Bromhead, none was more remarkable than the alteration of his demeanour to Stephen Dowse, and of his tone when he spoke of the bank-agent behind his back. Instead of showing contempt and aversion for his wife's cousin by testy utterances of 'pish' and 'pshaw,' he began to speak of him with kindness and respect. As he felt less power to direct the chariot of his life, and began to suspect he had been guilty of serious error in one most important arrangement of his affairs, he judged more leniently the rival charioteer who still held the reins with a firm hand. Stephen Dowse was no longer excluded from the sick-chamber, but was welcomed to the merchant's bedside—to tell the news of the town and neighbourhood. And in justice to Stephen it must be admitted that his bearing towards the invalid was considerate and conciliatory. Either by his own strength or the merchant's weakness, Mr. Dowse had contrived to win his way into John Bromhead's confidence; and as it was a part of Mr. Dowse's nature (pompous, prying, ungenerous man though he was) to be well disposed to those who acknowledged his power, his old hidden jealousy and hatred of the man who for thirty years had thwarted him, and disdainfully held him at a distance, gave place to gentler feelings for the antagonist who had at length extended to him the hand of good-fellowship.

Moreover, John Bromhead had confided to his wife's cousin a fact which to a man of the bank-agent's temper was an ample apology for those 'insolent speeches' the bitterness of which he had resolved "to lay back on their speaker's tongue." The long life quarrel of the two men had always been hidden from the world; the merchant, out of respect to his wife's

feelings, and also from a sense of personal dignity, having kept his fire-side bickerings out of the reach of town gossip ; and Stephen Dowse having always encouraged the town-club to believe that he was in reality a law of life to "that cantankerous dissenter who had married into the Dowse family." But Stephen Dowse had always secretly feared that the contention would become public ; in which case his importance would be lessened in the eyes of those who regarded him (in right of his Church-and-State principles) as the head of the Dowse connection,—of which connection Martha's husband was a member. As long as John and Martha both lived, Mr. Dowse deemed himself secure from exposure ; but the pompous man had long apprehended that the death of either of the two would show 'the world' how low an opinion the 'cantankerous dissenter' had always had of him. When the merchant's health first showed signs of failure, Stephen Dowse's satisfaction was lessened by the consideration that he would not appear as executor of John Bromhead, deceased. "And that'll be unpleasant, because it 'll make people talk," said Mr. Dowse to himself, in the quietude of his bank-parlour. "Of course, I don't want any of his money. If he left me twenty guineas for a ring, I'd give the money away in charity, and buy the ring with my own cash ; but it'll give rise to disagreeable observations, if his wife's nearest relation isn't one of his executors." Greatly relieved, and greatly mollified to his ancient adversary, therefore, was Stephen Dowse when John Bromhead, in the spring of 1821, said to him, "If this gout should take me off to-morrow, all my affairs will be found settled. There wont be much for my executors to do ; but in what little there will be for them to look after,

I hope you'll lend a helping hand, for I have put your name, Dowse, amongst the number."

This was the announcement which to Mr. Stephen Dowse was an ample apology for the 'insolent speeches.'

"I have never liked him," reflected John Bromhead on the evening of the day when he made this communication, "and we've had rough words over and over again. But he is a man of integrity, although I have frequently found him a disagreeable one. Moreover, he's Martha's nearest relation, and Carry's near relation; and as I have no near kin for them to rely upon when I am gone, they'll naturally trust to him for advice. So it's best for them, and right for myself, I should lay aside my animosity to him now that I am coming closer to Battistow churchyard. God help them! I never thought I should be cut down like this!—If I could live a short while longer! for their sakes, *only for their sakes*!—But I feel that another year will do for me! And Dowse is the best man to look after them, when they haven't me by their side. He knows business, and what is going on in the 'light lands,' and, if Edgar should be going wrong, he'll know it in time to save poor little Carry. Stephen Dowse, too, has more kindness than I have been accustomed to give him credit for. The information he gave me a fortnight since about that scamp, Alexander Barber, was conveyed to me with delicacy. He evidently wished to hurt my feelings as little as possible."

When John Bromhead got about again, the fresh, bright complexion (which Stephen Dowse always distrusted) had left him for ever. His voice had lost its heartiness, his eye grown dull, and his gait become more feeble. He only went down to the river side for an hour

or so in the middle of the day ; and he more and more left the management of his business to Mr. Michael Stott.

As the warm weather approached, and he regained a little of his old vigour, it was noticed that his interviews with Mr. Spencer Reeve became more frequent, and that he attended the services of St. Mary's church as often as those of 'the persuasion' chapel. Indeed the more rigid members of 'the persuasion' began to speak of him regretfully as a backslider, and a lukewarm adherent to 'persuasion doctrines.' Mr. and Mrs. Richard Camberwell attributed his 'wavering' to the influence of patient Martha, who was supposed to be urging him to return to the church, of which the Dowse family had always been enthusiastic supporters. But the more enlightened and generous members of 'the connexion' secretly sympathized with the broken man who, looking forward to his last repose in Battistow churchyard—by the side of his beloved mother, and faithful old nurse, and well-reputed kindred—felt himself drawn towards the clergyman who was devoting all his powers of mind, and wealth, and eloquence, to arouse in his parishioners a fervent desire to walk in the ways of holiness.

As for Martha,—though it was not her doing that John Bromhead went so frequently to St. Mary's church, she accompanied him with gladness. Never in the days of his vigour had John Bromhead exercised stronger sway over her religious life. In an early chapter in this book it is said, "he had changed her once ; but, as one secretly devoted to the world, he was powerless to change her again." But he was now no longer devoted to the world : he had re-awakened to religious life ; and now again she was ready to follow

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him, wherever he went. A generation of time since he had led her by argument more than love; now he controlled her by love more than argument. Moreover, when she was a young woman, she had left the church and become a nonconformist (like many other devout persons who took the same step at the same time) much more because church people seemed cold and careless, and dissenters appeared fervent and earnest in their endeavours to lead Christian lives, than because she held doctrinal opinions irreconcilable with those of the church in which she had been educated. But now that Mr. Reeve was effecting a revolution amongst the church people of the town, Martha had fewer reasons for thinking 'the persuasion' more favourable to godliness than the Established Church.

Serenely happy, therefore, was she when she sat by John Bromhead's side in Dr. Magnum's pew, in St. Mary's church. And very thankful was she to see how lively an interest Carry took in the rector's sermons, and how the gentle girl (who, much as she had been separated from her mother's hidden life, had always been a dutiful and loving daughter to her) was inspired to teach the poor, and visit the sick, and read religious books.

. What a gladdening sight this was to the mother who had feared that her only child would learn to care for nothing higher than the amusements of the Assembly Rooms!

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONVERSION.

THUS it came to pass that, though love for Edgar Turrett still remained her strongest sentiment, and most frequent subject of her thoughts, Carry Bromhead began to care for pursuits in which she could not hope for her lover's approval, and even had a vague apprehension of his displeasure. With her father's failing health constantly before her, the affectionate girl had a more impressive and *personal* insight into the vain and uncertain nature of earthly happiness than she had ever before obtained. Hitherto she had looked only on the sunny side of life, heartily enjoying its amusements, and rarely troubling herself about its graver duties. It had been a part of John Bromhead's system to make her content with this bright, sunny surface; not that he wished her to be a merely worldly woman, but because he was jealous of all influences which might give her gloomy views on matters pertaining to religion,—views that were very general amongst the earnest members of the dissenting 'persuasion;'

views that had made his own wife a less happy and less useful woman than she would otherwise have been. Judging that Carry's quick intelligence, sensitive temperament, and docile disposition rendered her especially open to receive the opinions of instructors, he had sedulously kept her away from companions and books that might make her over-curious about topics of theological controversy.

But the time had come when she could no longer be satisfied with the sunny side of life. "Up to this time," Fanny Magnum had said to her, "you've only been my echo, and a sweet musical echo, too; but now you'll have a voice of your own, and before long weaker voices to echo it. Every day now you'll find yourself growing more and more a woman, thinking more for yourself, and caring less to lean on me." The prediction was being gradually fulfilled. The girl had begun to inquire and to think. In a certain sense she was thinking *for* herself; but in no sense whatever was she thinking *by* herself. Not even the strongest intellect can work *by* itself. In the unseen world of thought, not less than in the visible world of social action, independence and isolation are impossible. The most vigorous thinker can do no more than withdraw himself from those by whom he is immediately surrounded, and seek nobler companions in the past.

But though Carry was thinking *for* herself, she never aspired to be self-dependent. She wished to satisfy her mind on points of great interest, and, to do so, she set about inquiring after the opinions of others, quite willing to receive their opinions as the law of her life.

Of her own accord she began to talk with her mother about religion; but not daring to speak as freely to her as she wished, Martha was guarded in her replies,

and advised the girl to talk to her father. For many weeks Carry could not find courage to act upon the advice; for, though she had never met with aught but sympathy and kindness from her father, she could not remember having spoken with him about the doctrines of Christianity, and, therefore, she feared she should pain him as well as herself by breaking down the restraints of old usage, and approaching a subject which he had always avoided in his close and tender intercourse with her.

At last, however, she stated a case to him; whereupon the merchant and his child had a conversation, the like of which they had never before maintained. Very re-assuring, and considerate, and anxious to help her, Carry found him; and when John Bromhead kissed her on the forehead after their talk, and said, "Don't let this be the last time we talk thus together," she went away very happy in her heart for what she had done. But though the father thus invited her to renew the discussion, he had never before felt himself less able to be his child's adviser and teacher; and the man who thirty years before had been an enthusiastic preacher to the dissenters of the 'light lands,' said to himself with emotion, "Notwithstanding all the noise I've made in the world, I am a poor, foolish, feeble old man! I to be the leader of that darling child! Merciful God, she's fitter to lead me!"

Feeling thus strongly his unfitness to be Carry's spiritual teacher, John Bromhead was greatly pleased to watch the influence gained over her by the rector. He encouraged her to leave off attending Mr. Bicker's chapel, and be present at St. Mary's, not occasionally, but at all the services; and it became his habit to ask her about the sermons when

he and she sat with Martha, during the Sunday evenings.

Soon Carry was not satisfied with listening to Mr. Reeve's sermons, but must needs take notes of them, which notes she subsequently copied out, filling them up as well as memory would permit her to do so, and preserving them as valuable records of spoken wisdom. Before twelve months had passed, she had several closely-penned books full of these reports of the rector's *extempore* addresses, which became favourite reading with her father and mother. Of course, she made no secret to Edgar of her reverence for her pastor; and he more than once came upon her when she was at work upon her manuscript books, on which occasions she told him what her hand and head (and heart too) were labouring at.

"That's all right," said Edgar, with a laugh of feigned good-humour. "Whatever the sermons may be in the original, I'll be bound they're worth reading when you've written them out."

"Indeed, they lose a great deal," replied Carry, artfully; "you'd hardly believe how much of their force I miss! I wish you'd judge for yourself. Spend next Sunday with me, and hear Mr. Reeve preach, and at the end of the week I'll send you my abstract to criticize."

But Edgar declined this invitation; and secretly he experienced no slight chagrin at finding how highly Carry thought of the rector, of whom he had declared emphatic dislike. Still he had no grounds for speaking an unkind word to her on the subject. It surely was no fault for a lover to reprehend, that a young lady should like to listen to the sermons of an eloquent preacher. "No, no, there's nothing

for me to put myself out about," observed the young Squire, not concealing from himself his regret that Carry had caught what he termed 'Reeve fever,' but still endeavouring to keep in view all the consolations attendant upon the misfortune. "It's true she knows I don't believe in the man; but men and women, it is understood, may love each other thoroughly, and yet be diametrically opposed in their religious views. I should never have loved her as I do love her, if I had not seen she possessed as much good sense as beauty. She lets me take my own course in my amusements, and has, therefore, good right to expect me to display the same liberality to her. Moreover, since, like every other woman, she must idolize a preacher, I may think myself lucky that she has taken to admiring a clergyman of the Established Church, and not a dissenting minister. Anyhow, the 'Reeve fever' takes her clear away from the ranks of the 'persuasion.'"

In excuse for which flippancy, Edgar's friends must remember that forty years since it was an almost universal custom with young men to speak lightly of sacred subjects. It should also be borne in mind that Carry's lover, in thus regarding her conduct, was endeavouring to look away from the annoyance he felt at seeing her rely upon the man whom he was resolved to fight. He was also trying to overcome a vague apprehension that her 'religious turn' would give rise to feelings, on his part as well as hers, which would either prevent their union, or grievously trouble their married life. For though he loved Carry loyally, and was ready to prove his devotion in every way, except by the sacrifice of his old-world pleasures, he had no intention to be ruled by a wife. The 'rough side' of his nature made him hold that it was meet and right

for the young Squire of Castle Hollow to be a law to others, as well as himself; and in his anticipations of the future, though he always conceived of himself as a considerate and sympathizing husband, the wife of the picture was always ready to submit to his will.

To his will it was clear that Carry would not render servile obedience. He had called the Rev. Spencer Reeve a 'canting hypocrite'; she had come to the conclusion that he was a 'good man.' At unguarded moments a fear would come over the young Squire that, before the long term assigned to their engagement was ended, Carry might discover other and more important matters on which to disagree with him. What if 'Reeve fever' should go on to 'Reeve madness,' and she should doubt if a woman ought to marry one whose religious opinions were diametrically opposed to her own? What if conscience should whisper to her, "Carry Bromhead, you who are ever imploring God to keep you of His mercy from the ways of evil, what do you mean by looking forward to marriage with a man whose heart is set upon the pleasures of this world?" And at such unguarded moments Edgar would stamp with his foot, and close his fist, and wish the new rector bad fortune in the next world as well as in this. But he wisely resolved neither to make troubles for himself, nor look at trials till they were near at hand. So long as he saw the bright blood and happy smile start to Carry's cheek, whensoever she heard his footsteps approaching her, the lover persuaded himself that 'Reeve fever' was no such terrible malady after all. So he took a hopeful view of the case, saying with a self-complacency not uncommon with young men forty years since, "After all, the man whom she loves is the power of whom a woman stands in most dread."

And in like manner, Carry refused to see the line of demarcation drawn between Edgar's life and her own, until she was compelled at length to look at it—when the line had become a huge black gulf of severance, over the turbulent waters of which he would not come to her, and she *dared* not go to him. She still persisted in persuading herself that he was *very good*, noble in his impulses, manly in his purposes, generous to the weak, fearless to the strong. But she had still to hope that in addition to all this, God would make him also *very religious*. Thus she persuaded herself, and thus she hoped. But, like Edgar, she too had her unguarded moments, when she would fly to the quiet of her private room, and falling upon her knees implore the all-gentle and all-strong Father, who lets weak women know Him and love Him, not to put upon her shoulders a cross too heavy for her to bear. The first of such unguarded moments occurred on the day after Edgar, at the Assize Ball, called the new rector 'a narrow-minded, meddling, canting hypocrite.' It occurred at the time when a cloud fell upon Carry's brow, because in the distance she saw a tiny speck, and a presentiment seized her that the tiny speck would grow into a great cloud, and the great cloud would dissolve itself in a rain of troubles and sorrows,—troubles and sorrows which she would have to live down.

She looked away from the cloud.

When her father's health left her free to pursue her pleasure, she still went to the balls and concerts of the Assembly Rooms with Fanny Magnum, and danced with Edgar. But she no longer enjoyed 'the privilege' as she had done, when it was first procured for her by scheming friends. The gladness of that petty triumph had gone; and when she attended the balls, she did so

for the sake of meeting Edgar, not for the pleasure of seeing and being seen by others. Indeed she would much rather have kept away from the music and mirth, and enjoyed his society in the quiet of the Gray Street drawing-room. But she did not tell him this. Her wish was to be his companion in everything that was not wrong of his life; so that she might lure him to join her in all that her conscience told her was right.

But though they both (in strong mutual love) looked away from the separation that was being wrought between them, they each had a consciousness of its existence,—a consciousness not the less depressing, because they never spoke of it to nearest friends, never gave hint of it to each other, never deliberately acknowledged it in their own separate breasts.

But the rector's work was visible to more than one spectator.

Martha saw it with delight, saying to herself and to God, "Oh God! thy mercies have again reached me. Carry's heart is quickened by thy divine grace, so that she has awakened to feel the power and know the secrets of thy gospel. Before she marries Edgar, he must be converted and regenerated also; for she will never consent to be the wife of a godless man." Seeing it, but remarking on it in another spirit, John Bromhead said, "It is as it should be. He loves her—even as I once loved his aunt. Such love will change him and bring him over to her." Observant Dr. Magnum made comment, "Well, well, if it causes the poor child one trouble, it will save her from worse sorrow."

And thus matters went on till the close of 1821,
VOL. II. U

when an event contributed to widen the gap of severance into a huge black gulf.

‘Little Fan,’ the one child on whom Carry’s friend had fixed her strongest affections and hopes, died. A mirthful, vivacious child, as blithe of heart as she was graceful in form, ‘Little Fan’ had never appeared, to those who most loved her, a creature made with too delicate an organization for this stern life, in which the weakest, not less than the strongest, have to live down tribulation. Even to her father’s watchful eye, trained to detect the first faint premonitions of disease, she had always seemed healthy and vigorous. Everyone who entered Bassingbourne House was her friend; merry and teachable, gracious and graceful, she was the laughing fairy friend of all,—servants and ‘quality’ alike. She took tribute and service from people of all degrees; and she royally repaid them with those strangely winning arts of which the mastery is confined to delicately nurtured children. Fanny Magnum took ‘little Fan’ into her confidence on housekeeping arrangements; Carry’s daily pastime was to give her instruction in reading and writing; the doctor’s patients used to send her fruit and flowers, turtle-doves and kittens; the footman of Bassingbourne House plied his knife right deftly, carving dolls and boats, and other wooden toys for her; nurse kept record of her witty sayings; the coachman was never better pleased than when he had orders to put ‘little Fan’ into her saddle, and lead her Shetland over the heath.

But now, ‘little Fan’s’ kisses and caresses, laughter and prattle were to be,—of the things remembered. Never again was Carry to stand at the foot of the Hall stairs, and hear the music of the child’s voice spring and dance from room to room, from passage to passage. Never

again was little Fan to be seen, leaning against the top-most balustrades of those stairs, with her head and all its silken ringlets thrown back, and her face turned wonderingly to the rays of light,—sent through the window above her head, to the dimness beneath her feet, in a bar of silver haze ! Never again was she to play about house and garden, with ball and skipping-rope ; or sit demurely with doll or book !

Is it weak, womanish tenderness thus to recall a simple child, whose influence endured when earth covered her beauty, and her fair spirit had ascended to the eternal Heaven, where patient sorrow-stricken women, animated by the faith on which vain philosophy coldly speculates, saw her long afterwards,—not darkly as through a glass ; but clearly, face to face ?

No one saw the speck in the fair fruit until it was about to fall.

One autumn afternoon, as the sun was setting, ‘ little Fan ’ was found by her mamma at a window of her nursery, which looked out upon Abbey Place, with her chin resting on the ledge of the window, and her head held by both her hands. It struck Fanny Magnum that she hadn’t heard her child’s voice throughout the afternoon ; and as the mother came upon her, resting in that weary attitude, there was a strange expression of wistfulness and fatigue in the little one’s face,—an expression that was at once novel and painful.

“ Why, singing-bird, where’s your music ? ” asked Fanny Magnum.

“ Oh, mamma—you frighten me ! ” said little Fan, starting at the voice.

“ Why, Fan, you’re in a brown study ?—what are you thinking about ? ”

“ Is a brown study anything evil, mamma ? ”

"People are in a brown study when they've forgotten themselves in thought,—when their wits have gone wool-gathering, as papa says," explained Fanny, with a laugh.

"My wits," returned 'little Fan,' gravely, "haven't been gathering wool;—but they've been thinking!"

Alarmed at the child's tone, not less than her unaccustomed look, Fanny sat down by her side, and kissing her inquired, "And what has my darling child been thinking about?"

"Why people trouble themselves so. That's what I have been thinking about, and I can't make it out. Why *do* people trouble themselves so? What *is* it for, mamma?"

Often, often, when the lips which first uttered it to her were cold and still, did this strange, perplexing question—now put so earnestly and so sadly—recur to Fanny Magnum.

Unable to make a better response, Fanny said, "Do they trouble themselves so much? I didn't know they did."

"Oh, mamma,—it's all trouble, day after day, and no rest—at least, no rest for many! Why *do* they do it? Why shouldn't we all give up troubling ourselves, and be happy? I've been looking out of the window at the people, and I'm sure they are very unhappy."

As these last words were spoken, Fanny Magnum saw the child's spelling-book on the floor by her feet, and concluded that the troubles and difficulties of the 'hard words' had caused 'little Fan' to vex herself about other troubles and difficulties of a 'hard world.'

"Your spelling has been too much for you, beauty. I see what is the matter."

"No, no,—mamma. I shall do them, dearest."

"Not to-night, anyhow, my pet!" replied Fanny picking up the book. "You've a headache."

"Oh, mamma," cried little Fan, suddenly blushing crimson, "I didn't mean to let you know. But the words did hurt my head so,—and,—and,—I couldn't keep them from falling to pieces. Don't tell Carry; she'll be so unhappy, and think she set me too much."

"We'll both of us take care of Carry," answered the mother, sitting down, and raising the child into her arms. But tell me all about it. Have you ever had a headache like this before?"

"Not so bad, dearest. But the lessons have hurt me,—only I *wouldn't* tell Carry; for she looks so pleased when I do a great deal. She is so kind—and dear! But this afternoon it was worse,—and I went to the window, and began to think! And when you came into the room, I hardly knew where I was."

And having said this, 'little Fan' threw her arms round her mother's neck, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Dr. Magnum was away from home, visiting country patients. Fortunately, the case, for the moment, required a mother's, rather than a physician's, care. Taking the child downstairs, Fanny gave her tea before the drawing-room fire, after which repast she was put upon the sofa, and amused with stories of what her mamma and aunts used to do in Bassingbourne House when they were children. There were no candles in the room; and as 'little Fan' lay on the sofa, watching the dance of the fire-light on the walls, and playing with the story-teller's ringlets, she ceased to fret about the world's troubles, and was as serenely content as child could be. But it seemed to her as though she were in a dream about her happy home and dear mamma, rather

than in the home itself, and with the mamma herself. And when, at eight o'clock, papa came into the room, saying, "Ha, ha ! my especial and peculiar old friends, you look very warm and cosy !" he seemed also like part of a delightful dream.

That headache was a sign of worse mischief than even Fanny had feared.

Lessons were discontinued ; and in their place alternate rest and out-door exercise, with medicines and more generous diet, were had recourse to.

But the cure came too late—the evil was already done.

All at once the child dropped from mirth to constant quietude—from gayest prattle and singing to silent and troubled meditation. When people approached her, they lowered their voices and walked softly ; whereas before that memorable autumn afternoon, no guest of Bassingbourne House had ever thought of 'little Fan' save as a hearty, buoyant pet, to be romped with, and kissed, and tossed about with merry noise.

The end was not far distant ; but it did not follow immediately upon the first alarm. There was a space, during which Fanny Magnum could look forward to the last great woe of her life, as, dark and terrible, it came upon her—that last great woe which she was required to live down.

It came sooner than the last day of 1821.

It came one night when Fanny Magnum was sitting in little Fan's nursery—sitting by the bed, on which 'little Fan' lay, by turns dozing and languidly waking up—to draw dear mamma towards her by the power of fading eyes, and thin lips that were almost too weak to form a kiss.

The child is sleeping now—not her last sleep ; but

for a few tranquil minutes, ere she says "good-bye" to her mamma for the ever of this life—not for the ever-and-ever. "Dearest Mamma," she said, half an hour since to Fanny Magnum, "I know now why people trouble themselves. They do it, so that they may enjoy the rest when it comes." That first and last perplexity of 'little Fan's' life, continued to trouble her until the concluding evening of her existence. In plaintive confidence to Carry and her mamma, she over and over again stated the problem, which distressed her. "For you see, Carry," she said, on one occasion, putting a feeble arm round her friend's neck, "it is such a little time from now till when you and papa and mamma, and I, and all of us, shall meet in Heaven. Then, since it is such a little time, people ought to be happy together, and love each other, and not trouble and work as they do.' But now the puzzle has been solved, and 'little Fan' is sleeping peacefully.

While the dying child is in quiet slumber, Fanny Magnum sits in the nursery, where glowing fire and shaded lamp scarce render visible the quaint carving of the oaken cornices, and the mouldings of the ceiling. The room was her nursery, long, long ago, when she shared it with her sisters; and after she and they had grown beyond need of a nursery, it was her bedroom, and she used it as such up to the time of her marriage. Thus she is watching her only child's last hours, in the room which, beyond all the other rooms of Bassingbourne House, is associated in her mind with vanished scenes, with the joys and griefs of days that are no more.

Memories glide in upon her of merry, boisterous, romping Christmas parties in that large room, now so still, when she (younger than 'little Fan') and her sisters, and other children of light-land 'quality,' in white

dresses and bright ribands, and with locks daintily dressed, ran round and round, singing old nursery carols, as they played 'Drop my love a letter,' or 'Oranges and lemons.' Ever and again, amidst these memories, rises up the gracious beauty of her mother, with clear silver laugh outlaughing the noisiest of her little guests. Then her father enters, and in a twinkling he is beset by the crowd of dancers, and blindfolded. Years pass on, and Fanny Magnum is alone in the old room. Her mother has gone to heaven ; her sisters are married women, in foreign lands, and she is the belle of Merton-Piggott, the toast of the Assembly Rooms ; the wild, wayward, mischievous beauty, with a train of admirers around her, whenever she appears at ball or 'promenade.' Strangely pathetic scenes have the oaken cornices looked down upon since they saw the Christmas parties of the children. A bitter, cruel story could the moulded ceiling tell of sleepless nights passed in weeping by the high-spirited girl, who, when the eyes of the world were upon her, was the brilliant light of life. The mouldings and cornices saw what the Assembly Rooms never suspected ; and, as Fanny Magnum sits by the bed of her child, she thinks of what the silent walls have seen. She thinks of the girl who, setting aside the 'chances' (as the Assembly Rooms termed them) by which she might have acquired wealth and rank, gave her love to a young soldier, against whom all prudent friends not unreasonably warned her, speaking of him as a reckless, impetuous spendthrift, altogether unworthy of a woman's love, notwithstanding his handsome form and face, and lively wit, and manly bearing. She ponders how this girl vowed to be faithful to this man, and how (frivolous and vain though the world deemed her) she loved him for years, in spite of

the detraction and the pity showered upon him,—loved him, hoping (against hope) to be his wife, when those who had misjudged him should acknowledge him to be, even as she had always seen him. And how she loved him, till that dreadful day when the news came that he had fallen, fighting for his country ! A private letter stated, “ When his body was prepared for burial, a locket, containing a lady’s portrait, was found lying on his breast, close to the spot where the ball entered. Of course, this memorial of affection was placed in the grave with him.” Ambrose Treve’s friends wondered whose portrait it was. Fanny Bassingbourne could have told them.—Oh, why do people trouble themselves so ?

The clock is ticking the last moments of the midnight hour ; the ashes are dropping from the fire ; and still ‘ little Fan ’ sleeps quietly—and still Fanny Magnum continues to gaze at the memories that rise upon her, and surround her.

She remembers how the girl, mourning for a loss which she was not known to have sustained, said : “ I’ll live it down. He is buried in my heart. Those who spoke evil of him shall not know where his tomb is ; for they’d do him insult even there. I’ll live it down,—my woe, his secret, everything but my love.” She remembers how the girl (let her be called ‘ woman,’ for though she appeared as pleasure-loving and sorrow-free as ever, the freshness of girlhood had left her for ever), nursed her father in his failing years, and then became the wife of that father’s physician. She remembers how the woman, before she married her husband, said : “ You ought not to give me your love ; for I can’t fully return it. I meant never to tell living man so much, but your tenderness to my dear father and to me makes me trust you with a secret. I once loved a man with

all my heart, and soul, and strength ; and he loved me deeply, nobly ; but he died ; and when he went away, he took with him my power to love any other,—as a wife ought to love her husband.—So, dear sir, let me keep to my loneness, and live it down to the grave.” She remembers how that confession was answered in such wise, that the woman gave her hand to the physician, saying : “ God help me, then, to give you the happiness which you expect from me. I dare to trust myself ; for as to the pure sorrow of the past,—I have lived it down.” She remembers how upon her marriage, that woman made a strong effort to throw from her life, the last recollections of her long unhappiness and dark misfortune, assuring herself that with a new career she would have brighter hopes and more enduring triumphs than any which made glad her former years. She remembers how that woman strove to make the old house in which she was born, and had always lived, a home to which her husband should bring his friends with proud happiness, and how she, not without success, employed all her energies and accomplishments to be a leader of that ‘ old-world fashion ’ which was passing away, like mist before a July sun, as all earthly vanities must pass away,—sooner, or just a little less soon. And as all the struggles, and schemings, and rivalries of the dead years rise with sharp-edged distinctness before her, ‘ little Fan’s ’ perplexing question,—not spoken by lips now, but by memory,—the stern monitress of every living creature,—comes to her clear, and plaintive, and solemn. “ Mamma, why *do* people trouble themselves so ? ”

Oh, let a wiser one than the simple teller of a domestic tale answer the question : Why *do* people trouble themselves so ?

"Mamma," says 'little Fan,' waking from her slumber.

"Yes, dearest. I am here. What is it, Fan?"

A faint gleam of its old beauty crossed the child's face, which for days past has been terribly changed

"Mamma, dear, do you know anyone in Heaven?"

"Surely, dear, there's Jesus. He has made himself known to all of us. He came down from heaven to the earth, so that we might know him."

"But, dearest, will he notice me as soon as I get there?—I am only a little girl."

"Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

'Little Fan' is silent, but there is no sign of returning sleep. Not a faint gleam now; but in all the witchery of her loveliest moments, the old beauty plays over her delicate face.

"Oh, mamma, I should be so happy if I thought an angel would meet me at the gate, and take me to Jesus. Don't you know an angel, mamma, who'll come and meet me?"

As she puts this question, 'little Fan' (who for days has not had power to raise herself from her pillow), sits up in bed, and repeats her question: "Don't you know an angel?"

Noiselessly falling on her knees, the mother puts an arm on either side of her dying child, and looking up into her face, says, slowly and very distinctly, "Fan, darling, an angel will meet you at the gate. He is waiting there now to receive you. He knows you are coming, and has been there for many an hour, waiting to lead you to Jesus. When he sees you, he'll come to you and say: 'Little Fan, you are my child. I once knew your mamma. When I was in the world, I loved her better than all others.'"

For a few short seconds the child is silent; every second adding to the fearful beauty of her excited face. Then she cries, "Mamma, mamma, tell me quickly. What shall I say to the angel? Oh, mamma,—tell me quickly."

"Say that I love him dearly—dearly. Say that papa loves him too. Oh, say it, darling! That is all. Say it to him often. Make him know it. Make him——"

But Fanny Magnum says no more; for 'little Fan' has sunk back upon her pillow with the sacred smile on her face that it is to wear until it is never more to be looked upon by human eyes.

Without word or cry, Fanny Magnum runs to the other side of the room, and snatching up the shaded lamp, hastens with it back to the pillow on which lies 'little Fan's' face—peaceful, and lovely, and strangely small."

In less than a minute the woman puts down the lamp, and walks hurriedly round the room, searching for something. On the dressing-table she finds what she seeks—little Fan's hand mirror.

Springing back again to the quiet bed, she holds the pretty toy before the face which has often been pictured on its bright surface, but never in greater loveliness.

A minute more, and then the mother is looking on the glass, in the hope of hopelessness. But it will not speak untruth.

She makes no exclamation; but falling once more on her knees, she throws her arms forwards, and buries her face in the bed, where her only child—the child she bore in trouble, and reared with trouble, and loved with all forgetfulness of trouble—lies dead.

Oh, why *do* people trouble themselves so?

Never, never, have the quaint black cornices and moulded ceiling looked down on sadder sight.

In less than ten minutes the door of that fearful chamber opens, and Dr. Magnum enters, causing (by the slight sound he makes) his wife to spring up, and regard him with surprise.

There is no need of words to inform the father of what he can see at a glance,—of what he has been prepared for.

“Darling,” he says to Fanny, “come with me. Come away—I will return and sit with her.”

“What! Yes!” answers Fanny, regarding her husband with a look in which surprise and fear and love are strangely mingled; “I knew you would be waiting for her at the gate;—but oh! how could I hope?—Oh, come to me, come to me.—Let me touch you!”

“Fanny, Fanny,” cries the doctor, “don’t you know me? I am your husband.”

“My husband!—Oh, husband, husband!” cries Fanny, falling into his arms, and sobbing hysterically, “I have been led back to old days—the old dark days.—I thought you were Ambrose.—Oh, husband, love me, help me,—more than ever!”

He says nothing; but he takes her tenderly in his arms, and bears her from the room, silently entreating the Giver of strength to make him a comforter to the woman who has striven to live her sorrow down, and, failing in the effort, has only lived into other grief.

* * * * *

So they took ‘little Fan,’ and laid her in the stillness of the old tomb, where generations of the Bassingbourne family had been placed before her.

Fanny and Carry were amongst the mourners who followed their darling to St. Mary’s Church; and when

they had returned from the grave to Bassingbourne House, they spent hours together in prayer, and in such intercourse as they had never before held during their long friendship. Humbly on their knees they implored God to make them good women, to turn their affliction into a profitable chastisement, to strengthen them to resist the temptations of a wicked world, to subdue the evil which Satan had planted in their hearts, to inspire them with constant love of Him, and finally to receive them, for dear Christ's sake, into heaven, where friends are not parted from friends—where mothers are not parted from their children.

And daily this intercourse was renewed.

When the newness of their bereavement had passed away, the simple women were wont to refer to the change that it wrought in them as their 'conversion.'

And truly it was a conversion;—for they turned away from the levities and vanities of their former days, and henceforth were bent on living down the evil and sadness within them, by doing battle with the evil, and by ministering to the sadness without them—by earnest prayers, and good works, and contrite behaviour.

Perhaps they erred in this new life. Perhaps they imagined that wrong existed in pursuits which were really innocent; perhaps their views were narrow—limiting the ways of Divine Power to their own contracted knowledge; perhaps they yielded to despair when they might have cherished hope; perhaps they would have been happier themselves, more useful to others, and not less acceptable to their Father in heaven, if their conversion had, in some respects, been other than it was.

If such were the case, the more the pity, and no less the sympathy for them.

If, in their anxiety to be void of offence, they withdrew from pleasure in which they might, without any ill consequence, have found salutary recreation,—who will sternly censure them?

Not those who know how far better it is for weak, erring creatures to be over-ready to detect sin in all mere worldly amusements, than to regard them as all harmless alike.

Not those who, with meekness and fervour, are seeking pardon for the evil of their youth.

CHAPTER XIX.

CASTLE HOLLOW AND ELSEWHERE IN 1821.

THE year 1821, which concluded so mournfully in Basingbourne House, brought more of sorrow than joy to Castle Hollow.

The same spring which tried John Bromhead so severely with gout, laid the old Squire on a bed of sickness. His malady was a 'bad cold'—what is now-a-days called influenza—and it reduced him so much that Dr. Magnum shook his head ominously, and notwithstanding his encouragements to Aunt Adelaide, deemed it highly probable that, before the warm weather came, another lord would be reigning in the Hollow House. For two months, old Antony Turrett was confined to the house, and when he at length 'got about' once more, he displayed a loss of vitality that justified the gloomy apprehensions of his daughter and grandson. He no longer cared to mount 'Duke,' and ride slowly about the heath. Towards the end of May, when Edgar had led him once or twice up and down the terrace, the veteran found himself wearied with the exercise, and

averred that the exertion was enough for the day. "I wont part with 'Duke,' " he said to Edgar, after one of these walks, " though I dare say I shall never mount him again. The old horse must stand in the stable, as long as his master sits in the library. When I am gone, you may shoot him, my boy—but you mayn't sell him. He shan't have a bad owner."

" You'll ride him again, grandfather," replied Edgar, embarrassed and pained by this anticipation of the time when he would be Squire, and the old man would be reposing in the church hard by, within a few paces of *Gulielmus de Turribus*.

" Maybe, in summer," quietly responded the other, " but never again after that! No, boy, it is time for me to think of the grave, and to leave off wishing for more life. Thank God! I leave you behind me to keep up the old family in the 'light lands.' It would be bad for the country to have it die out. Old families are like old friends—they can't be replaced. I can leave you with confidence that the dignity of the house will be maintained; but——"

Noticing the pause, Edgar said, " Go on, now, sir. I don't like to be made to think that the time will ever come when I shall be without you; and therefore it isn't for pleasure that I ask you to go on.—You were about to give me a direction; pray, give it."

" I paused, boy, because I feared to hurt you, as a caution—however delicately conveyed—implies a fear that it may be needed; and I am sure, very sure, that you require no hint to carry out my wishes in one respect.—I was thinking of Adelaide."

" Heaven bless her! Indeed, there is no hint needed. As long as she lives she will be mistress of the Hollow House. Carry loves her, sir, as much as we do; and

we have often spoken about the care we shall take to show her that we wish to live here as her children."

"Edgar," said the Squire, in a broken voice, with great warmth, "you are worthy of the love she has shown me, and I don't know how to say more in your praise.—There may be other women as good as she in the world; but since her mother died, I never met one. Take care of her, lad.—God looks down with love upon the roof that shelters such a creature. If your old grandfather ever gets to heaven, it'll be because his daughter Adelaide set his face, and kept it, in the right direction!"

"Sir, I have never borne myself towards her—as a nephew to an aunt," replied Edgar, with corresponding earnestness. "We have been friends,—always friends. Were she younger, I should say, we've been like brother and sister. As it is, I may say we've been like son and mother. I always look to her as my mother."

"You have good reason to do so, my boy," answered the Squire, in a low, husky tone.

And while the Squire and his grandson were thus speaking of Adelaide Turrett, she lay on her sofa in the drawing-room,—paler, thinner, more delicate than when the reader last saw her. Antony Turrett was but one of two patients whom Dr. Magnum had on his list at the Hollow House, that spring. "Darling," she had said to Carry Bromhead, "I was never strong,—and causes, which I trust you will never hear of, have made me more delicate than I should otherwise have been. Life isn't as strong in me as it was a few years back; and though I make no noise about my apprehensions, I think you'll see that ere long I shall gently go away from you, and we shall see each other no more till we meet in heaven." Her words were coming true.

Hers was no ailment to which an earthly physician

could minister. Her physical powers were gradually succumbing before intense, unintermittent anxiety of mind. The long labour of living her secret down became harder and more cruel as the weary effort—the effort of nigh thirty years' duration—was drawing to a close. Compelled to guard in her own breast the knowledge of circumstances that had recently transpired with regard to 'her secret,' she found the struggle to adhere to her purpose more terrible than it had ever been. The old Squire was at length a sharer of only a part—and that the smaller part—of the fearful facts that haunted her day and night. *Their* secret was one that rested on a belief that Herbert Andrews was dead; *her* secret was one embracing the certainty that Herbert Andrews was alive, in his native land. And in addition to this knowledge, was a fear that the clue to the mystery of the Hollow House had been picked up by a clever, scheming, unscrupulous knave. What a relief to the woman's agonized mind would have been a confidante—whom she could safely have admitted to the darkness and concealment of her inner life! But such comfort she might not seek.

Blessed in his blindness, the old Squire did not perceive the change that was gradually, but *not* slowly, coming over her. He did not see her wasting cheek and anxious countenance, and the many signs of broken spirits and failing health that are visible only to the eye. Her voice (she thanked God for that!) was unaltered, and though her hands grew thinner, she could still touch the keys of her piano with firmness and feeling. When he asked for the old songs and music, she was always ready to gratify him. Had his health been such as it was in the preceding year, he would still have looked to her to accompany him in his rides.

But the change was marked by others, and perplexed some of them. The servants, and villagers, and tenants heeded it. Merton-Piggott gossiped about it. When the members of the 'town-club' remarked that Dr. Magnum gave but a poor account of Miss Turrett, Stephen Dowse, assuming his most sapient air and severest tone of commiseration, would observe, "Ah, poor creature, she has enough to make her unhappy, and wear her to the grave! The marvel to me is, that she is alive. Poor thing! Poor thing!" To which Mr. Tiltot would reply, "Indeed, Mr. Dowse! Bless me, you don't say so! The young Squire unlucky with his horse-racing! Ah, dear me! I thought there'd come no good of his mixing himself up with Alec Barber." Where to Mr. Stephen Dowse would rejoin with tenfold greater severity, "If I know anything about Mr. Edgar Turrett's pecuniary affairs,—mind you, Mr. Tiltot, I don't go so far as to say that I do know anything about them,—such knowledge would come to me either as a matter of professional confidence or family confidence; and I believe I am not in the habit of making either my professional secrets or my family secrets topics of discussion in this club. If I am wrong in my belief, perhaps some member of this club will be good enough to set me right." By which speech, Mr. Tiltot was morally laid prostrate at the feet of the bank-agent,—a position in which Mr. Dowse delighted to see his friends. By which speech, Mr. Tiltot was morally trampled upon by Stephen Dowse,—an exercise that always contributed to Mr. Dowse's enjoyment of life. By which speech all the members of the town-club (Messrs. Tiltot and Dowse included) were induced to say to themselves, "Stephen Dowse is a man of high honour—as a Dowse ought to be; and he has a close

tongue—as a bank-agent ought to have. He could show up a pretty state of things about young Squire Turrett; but he is too honourable and close-tongued a man to do so.” And just as much as Mr. Stephen Dowse gained in public estimation, the young Squire of the Hollow House lost.

The change was visible also to Edgar Turrett.

“Dear aunt,” he observed one day to Adelaide Turrett, “I am deeply concerned to see that you do not get better. Don’t you think you ought to try change of scene and air?”

“And alarm my father?” was the answer. “Edgar, if he knew how ill I was he would have an attack of his heart-affection,—and, in his present state of health, that would kill him.”

Edgar was silent. He could not reply to this argument. He could not say, “Better, dear aunt, that you should pursue a chance of benefit, though by doing so you run the risk of killing him.”

“Moreover, dearest,” Miss Turrett continued, “the change would do me no good. Dear, dear Edgar, I know that I am very ill, and I look to a not far distant death. Don’t be sad about me. My best comfort and support will be to feel that I am by his side,—doing a daughter’s pleasant duty to the last. If I might be permitted to pray by his bed, when he breathes his last, I should be content, and happy to say, ‘Now, God, let me go also.’ Yes, yes, I could even be resigned to parting from you. For we must part one day.”

Then, the tears springing to her eyes, she added after a pause, “Oh, Edgar, though I do not live to see your children, make them familiar with my memory,—make them love it. By the fire-light, on winter evenings, when they sit on your knees, talk to them about me;

tell them that I loved you as though you were my own child. Make them love me."

In addition to 'Reeve Fever,' Edgar Turrett had therefore abundant reasons for being less pleased with life in 1821 than in the latter part of the preceding year.

Could he have contributed to the comfort of his grandfather or aunt by remaining at home, he would have spent all his time between Merton-Piggott and Castle-Hollow; but Miss Turrett and the old Squire were alike urgent on him to travel about the 'light lands' and the 'corn-country,' as though they were in a more satisfactory state of health. Indeed, they showed signs of genuine pain when their boy made arrangements to stay with them in the Hollow House, instead of taking his part in the spring steeple-chases of the corn-country.

So, to make them easy as much as to please himself, the young Squire was daily in his saddle, riding with the various packs of the two counties, or acting as amateur jockey at steeple-chases, or showing himself at King's Heath, and on the minor race-courses of the country.

Perhaps it would have been better for him if he had kept more at home; though the worst influences of his life in 1821 would have reached him there almost as easily as they reached him elsewhere. Censorious observers remarked that the young Squire showed no inclination to keep in a sick-house, and hinted that it would be more becoming in him to remain longer by the side of his grandfather and aunt, as they in their broken health must stand in need of cheerful society. Mr. Dowse even went so far as to say to his companions that the "young Squire's neglect of his dying relations was brutal, absolutely inhuman and brutal:" and to

himself the bank-agent observed indignantly, "What an exhibition of villany! He has actually stripped his aunt of every shilling of her savings, and now hasn't the decency to attend upon her dutifully in her last days! What a husband such a fellow will make! Poor Carry!"

Nor was the bank-agent the only man of the 'light lands' who spoke thus unjustly and severely of Edgar. Grave and respectable people were very generally predicting that the young Squire was taking a wrong course, and would bring the name of Turrett to disgrace. Mysterious rumours went about that he was forming bad associates, was given to betting and games of chance, had lost more money than he could afford to lose, and had transactions with King's Heath and Sedgehassock loan-brokers. It is true there was but slight foundation for this superstructure of ill repute; but public opinion frequently draws hasty conclusions from trifling facts, and almost as frequently that moral censorship of 'society' which does so much good in keeping ordinary and timid men in straight paths—misjudges and injures those who resent the criticism and brave the disapprobation of 'the world.' The young Squire was not unaware that gossip was busy with his doings. Even John Bromhead, who was very careful not to assume a tone of dictation to Carry's accepted suitor, had delicately hinted to him that he did ill to give public countenance to a man of such bad character as Alec; and Lady Farrell had frankly told him, that his connection with a King's Heath blackleg was making him the object of unpleasant remarks. But these intimations, striking Mr. Edgar Turrett on the rough side of his nature, did him more harm than good, spurring him to defy public opinion. Instead of taking

the suggestions in good-humour, and resolving to exercise a little *finesse* towards his busy-tongued watchers, he was bent on showing his high spirit,—and on proving that a Turrett of the Turretts would not submit to impertinent control. Instead of conciliating his neighbours, as a man of greater experience and better judgment would have done, he decided to ‘fight them,’—as any young man, much his inferior, might have decided.

Far from drawing away from Alec Barber, he strengthened his league with him, even consenting to join in partnership with him, in the purchase of a young mare that was to win them half a dozen handicap stakes, and then be sold with a great profit. The consequence of which arrangement was, that he and Alec were advertised in sporting papers as joint owners of Miss Lydia. And when she proved a bad speculation, the professional King’s Heath men winked at each other, and observed that Alec had caught a flat, and would make a penny out of him,” whilst the shrewd business men of the country made comment, “If young Mr. Turrett is going in for that sort of game, it is easy to see what’ll become of the Hollow estate a few years hence.”

Although Edgar did not suspect the truth, that Alec Barber played him a black trick in the matter of ‘Miss Lydia,’ and came out of what appeared to be a ‘losing venture’ richer by £300 more than he entered it, he was still much nettled and frightened by the affair. As a ‘practical man’ he greatly objected to losing his money; and all the more did he dislike to do so, because he had never before been bitten to the same extent. The loss was so serious, that he had to look about him before he could meet it. Had Aunt

Adelaide been in satisfactory health, he would have taken her into his confidence, and asked for a loan from those savings which he believed to be still in the custody of the Merton-Piggott bank, and which he was thought by Mr. Dowse to have already appropriated to his own uses. But since such an application could not be thought of while she was so weak and delicate, he was reluctantly compelled to do what he had never before done ;—obtain a sum from a money-lender. This transaction he felt to be as great an humiliation, as it was an embarrassment ; and he made a wise resolve to live with strict economy till he had paid off the ugly debt.

To which resolve Mr. Alec Barber offered opposition that nettled his young ‘patron,’ and tended more than all the gossip to effect a rupture between them.

“(Emphatic expression) don’t say die, Squire !” emphatically observed Alec, combing his black whiskers with his fingers, and then biting them. “What’s the touch of a few hundred to a man of ‘quality and estate’ like you, squire ? Have another fling in, Squire. Sink the mare, what’s the odds we don’t yet make a pot out of her !”

“You may buy my share, if you like, Alec,” returned Edgar bluntly. “Anyhow, she wont run anywhere again with my money on her back.”

“What, Squire, going to draw your name out of the firm ?”

“Exactly,” replied Edgar—with a flush of indignation at the increased familiarity of Alec’s tone.

“Going to give Alec the go-by, Squire, now that he (a poor man) has lost without a hair of his body turning, what a rich man like you, can’t drop without all this devil’s own rout. Ay,—that’s the game, is it ?”

"I don't lay my loss to you. All I say is—I've had enough of the game : and as I believe Miss Lydia was foaled for bad luck, I won't let either my name or my fortune go with her."

For a minute Alec was silent, and then renewed the attack in a different way.

"You're down in the mouth, Squire," he said, assuming a more respectful voice, "but you'll soon be up again. 'Black Baron' will put your bank-book all square, and pay off that little bill of *ours* too. The 'Baron' is a clever horse. Ay,—he *is* a horse : he is what I call a horse with *ability*."

"Yes, the Baron is no flincher," returned Edgar, who was always pleased to hear the praises of his favourite horse.

"He has *ability*, Squire," continued Alec enthusiastically,—“and that's what I want in a horse. Give me a horse with *ability*. If a horse hasn't got ability, he isn't worth a knacker's blessing—skin me blue, if he is, Squire. There are some horses that are born fools, and no man, I don't care who he is, can ever make anything of them but fools. Buy a horse that's a fool, and keep him five years,—blister him, fire him, feed him, train him, go to the other side of brimstone pond with him, and—he's a fool still. I say give me a horse with ability. So long as he has got that, I'll give him head, legs, tail, coat, constitution, and luck."

"True, Alec," responded Edgar, amused with this burst of eloquence, but wondering whither it was tending.—“But what of it?"

"What of it?—Why, just this, Squire. You take the 'Baron' over to Hardacre, and just show those Hardacre officers what *ability* means. Just teach them a bit of simple division, that ones into ones go once—

and leave nothing over. There's a hundred and fifty guineas waiting—for you to pick 'em out of the mud. Go in, and pick 'em up. Lay a cool two hundred on the 'Baron,' and pick that up too. And there you are, Squire. Don't you ever say that Alec Barber's eyes dropped from a mulberry tree! If you do, King's Heath men wont believe you."

Edgar looked at the man with a hard look, as he asked, "Who is to ride the Baron at Hardacre Steeplechase?"

"Who should ride him but yourself, Squire? Skin me purple, if there's a man in all the 'light lands' who can touch you when you're in the saddle!"

"No, Alec, that wouldn't do,—it would never do for *me* to ride in the Hardacre running."

"Then let me be jockey. I have ridden the 'Baron' before now."

"That wouldn't do any better," replied Edgar, in the same hard, quiet tone.

"Why not? What are you at, Squire?" inquired Alec, puzzled by his patron's manner.

"Just this, Alec. To win the Hardacre 'hundred and fifty guineas' you must have a horse with ability, and a rider who's a fool. I am not going to run the 'Baron' over ground where there are staked fences, put up for the mere purpose of ripping horses open. I don't care about my neck, but may I die of glanders—if I take any beast of mine out for such sport! It may suit His Majesty's cavalry officers, but it wont suit a simple country gentleman.—So you know now what I think of your plan!"

"Umph! that's all I get for my advice."

"Its only fault is that to follow it would be to encourage what I think unfair sport. Yes, it has

another fault.—It was given without being asked for.”

“Thank you, Squire,—that’s broad enough hint for Alec Barber. Throw him over, if you like. Time was when he served your turn, and then you were good enough to give him greater freedom, without taking offence.”

Don’t be a fool, man. I am not going to turn away from you,” answered Edgar, greatly irritated, and not less ashamed at his irritation, and in the excitement taking a course for which he could not have assigned his reasons, “I am not going to give you the cold shoulder. I believe you to be an honest man, as you King’s Heath men go, though your luck isn’t quite as good as you’d wish to make out;—and what’s more, if I hadn’t a better reason for sticking to you, *that* would be enough to keep me your friend.”

As he spoke he threw down, for Alec to read, an anonymous letter, written in a woman’s hand, which he had received a few days before.

“Mr. Turrett, I implore you,” ran the letter, “to have as few dealings as possible with Alec Barber. The writer of this knows him well, far better than you know him. He is a bad man, and is bent on plundering you. You are not the first gentleman who has repented of trying to help him. Be warned.”

Whiter than its usual pallor was Alec Barber’s face when he read this.

“Thank you, Squire,—do you know the handwriting?”

“No,—do you?”

“Not a line of it; but I should like to keep it. Maybe, one of these days, I shall find out who my kind friend is.”

“You may have it.”

"Thank you, Squire, you're a gentleman of fine true spirit. And if my tongue has offended you, I hope you'll excuse it. I have been having a little brandy this morning."

"Good! Then don't talk any more about my turning my back on you. You behave as you've always done, and I'll be one of your supporters; let all the 'light lands' be crying evil of you. Now, as my horse has been walking up and down there long enough, I'll get into the saddle and be off to Merton-Piggott. But mind, I have nothing more to do with Miss Lydia."

"Very good, Squire," returned Alec, with a submissive air, "that's settled then. I'll be on the lookout for a buyer, and when I hear of one, you shall have notice."

"That's right. I suppose I shall see you in the 'corn country' a fortnight hence."

"Most likely, Squire. After our mishap with the mare, I must keep a sharp eye after business."

Whereupon Edgar left the private room of the Gedgrave Horse-shoes, in which this interview had taken place, and, mounting horse, galloped off to Merton-Piggott, where he had an engagement in Gray Street.

Standing more than four miles away from the East-haven turnpike-road, at the crossing of four by-roads, the Gedgrave 'Horse-shoes' was an establishment, the like of which could not at this date be found in the 'light lands,' though forty years since there were many similar houses of entertainment in the wide, open region. A large house, abounding in windows and passages, it could give a separate chamber to each of

half a score guests. Two miles away from the nearest private habitation, and flanked with farm-buildings, it had few of the outward signs of a tavern, but it carried on a brisk trade in a spot where strangers, ignorant of the ways of the country, would have supposed that customers were few. It was known as a good 'half-way house,'—as a tavern lying at a central point between certain minor towns, which were too far apart for travellers, with heavily laden carriages, to make the journey from one to another without rest. The inn, therefore, enjoyed a steady flow of custom; and that wayfarers might be induced to take more than brief bait and rest, host and hostess supplied them with comforts which, in these times of railroads, would be looked for in vain in an isolated hostelry. In the garden there was a box-tree bower, in which the patrons of 'the house' during the warm months drank old port,—a bowling-green, for the recreation of visitors,—and sitting-rooms and chambers, furnished for ease, and not for mere hard endurance. When gentry and yeomen drew up at the 'Horse-shoes,' they knew that their horses would be well cared for, and that good meat, good cooking, good wines, pleasant rooms, and chairs able to give rest to weary limbs, awaited them within. With sportsmen, for twenty miles round, it was a favourite place of meeting. The substantial comfort and drowsy tranquillity of old-world manners pervaded the place. My hostess was a dame of imposing carriage and costume, chatting freely with old guests—as a country lady might chat with old friends; and my host had never in all his life worn black tail-coat, or carried dirty napkin under his arm. Portly and purple-faced, he took his ease in his inn as much as any of his guests, but the greater part of his

time he spent in the open air, walking over his farm of six hundred acres,—or riding the strong brown horse which, on hunting days, bore him with distinction in the field.

Such was the tavern in which Edgar and Alec Barber had met by appointment.

The reader will meet them there again.



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